

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**MINNESOTA GOODWILL® HONORED NATIONALLY
FOR SUCCESS IN SERVING FAMILIES**

ST. PAUL, MN — Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota (St. Paul) has been designated by Goodwill Industries International as a 2019 Center of Excellence for Mission Innovation. In collaboration with Ramsey County Workforce Solutions and several partner organizations, the Goodwill launched Families Achieving Success Today (FAST) to assist Minnesota families facing financial hardships.

Through the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), families facing financial hardships are eligible for a lifetime limit of 60 months of assistance. FAST targets public assistance recipients with one or more disabilities who have already reached that 60-month limit, are facing systemic barriers, and may also be experiencing other challenges, such as mental health conditions, difficult family situations, lack of community safety, and more. FAST uses an Individual Placement and Support (IPS) evidence-based coaching program to meet each individual where they are, catering to their needs.

FAST co-locates a multidisciplinary team — including mental and physical health providers, cultural elders and cultural services, county case managers and more — to deliver a spectrum of coordinated full-family services in a safe, supportive and culturally attuned space. FAST's IPS employment and support services are time-unlimited benefits, affording individuals and families the opportunity and support network necessary to address their various needs.

Additionally, the FAST model addresses head-on Minnesota's extreme racial disparities in earnings and opportunity/access. FAST integrates key community-based leaders and partners to inform and deliver culturally relevant services for the two populations hardest hit by Minnesota's racial disparities — African Americans and American Indians. To further reclaim control from systems originating within the dominant culture, FAST encourages service delivery in the participant's cultural community (e.g., at home, in community or religious centers, or in other public venues) as well as within the Goodwill's tailored service space.

Since FAST's inception in 2016, the program has placed more than 120 individuals into employment at an average wage that is \$3.14 higher than Minnesota minimum wage. FAST also provided nearly 300 individuals and families with services spanning across adult and children mental health, health navigation and housing services. FAST enrollees are 4.4 percent more likely to have more earnings than their control group counterparts.

"FAST is a program that goes beyond surface-level requirements to really address root causes of challenges of Minnesotans in an effort to improve their lives for the long-term," said Dr. Michael Wirth-Davis, president and CEO at Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota.

This first-in-the-nation model has received attention from several government offices and national and state conferences, including a Commissioner's Circle of Excellence Award from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

The Goodwill Center of Excellence Award for Career Navigation celebrates a local Goodwill organization as an innovator in any or all of the three strategic mission priorities: career navigation, financial wellness and inclusion and diversity for equity. These three strategies highlight the importance of career preparation beyond the first job, family financial security to interrupt generational poverty, and inclusive practices to ensure diverse communities move toward equity. Launched in 2001 with the generous support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Center of Excellence Awards recognize local Goodwill organizations with exceptional family strengthening practices. The award was recently presented at Goodwill's annual spring conference in Ft. Worth, TX.

The FAST Program is financially supported by the Ramsey County and Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota.

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ABOUT GOODWILL EASTER SEALS MINNESOTA

Serving Minnesota and western Wisconsin for 100 years as a leader in employment services, Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota provides education, job training and placement services to eliminate barriers to work and independence. Revenue from 50+ retail stores — along with grants, fees and other financial contributions — supports programs throughout Minnesota. Our nonprofit model diverts more than 60 million pounds from landfills annually and helps connect four people to jobs every day.

ABOUT GOODWILL INDUSTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Goodwill Industries International (GII) is a network of 160 community-based, autonomous organizations in the United States and Canada with a presence in 13 other countries. GII is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that is recognized by GuideStar with its Platinum Seal of Approval, the organization's highest rating for charities. For the past three years, Goodwill was ranked in the top five brands that inspired consumers the most with its mission in the World Value Index, commissioned by the creative agency, enso. Goodwill has been on *Forbes'* list of top 20 most inspiring companies for three consecutive years, the only nonprofit featured on that list.

Local Goodwill organizations are innovative and sustainable social enterprises that offer job placement and training services, and other community-based programs by selling donated clothing and household items in more than 3,300 stores collectively and online at shopgoodwill.com[®].

Goodwill helps people facing challenges to finding employment, including people with disabilities, veterans and military families, youth and young adults, older workers, people reintegrating into society, and others working to advance their careers. Local Goodwill organizations build revenues and expand employment opportunities by contracting with commercial, state, government and non-government organizations to provide a wide range of business services, including janitorial and grounds maintenance, flexible staffing, food service, manufacturing and contracts packaging, reverse logistics, document imaging and shredding, and laundry services.

Last year, local Goodwill organizations collectively placed more than 288,000 people in employment in the United States and Canada. In addition, more than 36 million people used computers and mobile devices to access Goodwill education, training, mentoring and online learning services to strengthen their skills, and more than two million people received in-person services.

Goodwill is both an icon and accessible neighbor: more than 82 percent of the U.S. population resides within 10 miles of a Goodwill location.

For more information or to find a Goodwill location near you, visit goodwill.org, or call (800) GOODWILL. Follow us on Twitter: @GoodwillIntl and @GoodwillCapHill, and find us on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube: GoodwillIntl.