



800 West Pacific Coast Highway  
Long Beach, CA 90806-5299  
Telephone: (562) 435-3411  
TTY: (562) 590-8588  
FAX: (562) 495-1447

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Paulette Thornton  
562.435.3411, ext. 267  
pthornton@goodwillsolac.org

**August 22: Recent High School Grads Earn Certificates for  
Completing Goodwill's Free Certified Nurse Assistant Training Program**

***Goodwill Graduates its First Class of Students Who Originally Enrolled  
in its Healthcare Academy While Attending Long Beach High Schools***

Long Beach, CA—August 13, 2014—Recent high school graduates pursuing healthcare careers will soon earn certificates for completing a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) Training Program run by Goodwill, Serving the People of Southern Los Angeles County (SOLAC). The 10 students will receive their certificates at a special graduation ceremony held from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Friday, August 22 at Goodwill SOLAC's headquarters in Long Beach.

The certificate ceremony will graduate the first class of students who enrolled in the training program after completing healthcare academies at Cabrillo, Jordan and Poly High Schools in Long Beach. The Long Beach Unified School District collaborated with Goodwill SOLAC last year to start a healthcare academy program involving each of the three high schools. The healthcare academies were designed to help provide a career path for low-income high school students who did not necessarily have college plans but demonstrated an interest in working in the healthcare field. Once the students successfully concluded their high school healthcare academies, they were eligible to enroll in Goodwill SOLAC's CNA Program—free of charge.

"We were looking to help low-income students who weren't necessarily college bound, but had an interest in healthcare," said Ben Espitia, Director of Goodwill SOLAC's Workforce Development Department. "Not being college bound may have been no fault of the student...life may have just gotten in the way. So we created another career path for these students so they wouldn't fall through the cracks."

When the healthcare academies launched in June 2013, administrators from the three high schools identified incoming senior-year students to participate in the new program. That September, the students took healthcare courses at their schools while participating in Goodwill SOLAC's preparatory training program one Saturday a month. The preparatory training program enabled students to visit a convalescent care facility, meet industry professionals and receive career mentoring.

-more-

After students graduated from their healthcare academies this past June, they joined their families at Goodwill SOLAC for an orientation about the organization's CNA Program before enrolling in the program's nine-week training session. The program requires students to participate in classroom instruction for the first two weeks, with the remaining weeks spent at a five-star convalescent facility to gain hands-on training with patients. Students must pass a State of California Department of Health Services exam by the end of the training session in order to graduate from the program.

Goodwill SOLAC is the first Goodwill organization in the nation to be named a state Certified Nurse Assistant Training Academy. Although since 2005 Goodwill SOLAC has operated a CNA Program for individuals of all ages for a nominal fee, this is the first year the organization has designed the program to specifically target high school students.

"Once our students become certified nurse assistants, they are eligible to get training as a licensed vocational nurse," said Susan Gavel, Program Director and Instructor for Goodwill SOLAC's CNA Program. "This program is a great opportunity for students because not only do they gain employable skills, they also can move up the career ladder."

Family and friends of the graduates will attend the August 22<sup>nd</sup> certificate ceremony as well as local community leaders, school officials and Goodwill SOLAC board members. During the event, a graduate is slated to share remarks about his or her experience in the training session and how the healthcare program is helping students create a promising career path.

The CNA Program is made possible by the funds generated from donated goods sold in Goodwill SOLAC's 15 retail stores. Goodwill SOLAC accepts donations at its seven Attended Donation Centers and its retail stores. To learn where to donate and what is acceptable to donate, please visit [www.thinkgood.org](http://www.thinkgood.org).

### **About Goodwill SOLAC**

Goodwill SOLAC is a nonprofit organization that transforms donated goods into job training, education and placement services for individuals with barriers to employment. Goodwill SOLAC serves 22 cities and communities throughout Southern Los Angeles County. Goodwill SOLAC's main facility—located at 800 W. Pacific Coast Highway in Long Beach—houses its administrative offices, training programs, processing operations, transportation fleet, LiNKS Sign Language & Interpreting Services, a retail store and its e-commerce operations. For more information about Goodwill SOLAC, please visit [www.thinkgood.org](http://www.thinkgood.org).

# # #