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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Goodwill<sup>®</sup> Celebrates National Disability Employment Awareness Month During October**

Long Beach, CA—October 5, 2015—Throughout October, Goodwill Industries International is joining the nation in acknowledging the importance of employees with disabilities – a vital component of the U.S. labor force – for National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This year’s celebration marks 70 years since President Truman authorized Congress to officially recognize workers with disabilities.

This year’s theme, developed by the U.S. Department of Labor – “My Disability Is One Part of Who I Am” – underscores the fact that employees with disabilities bring a wide variety of skills to the table. They make up nearly 20 percent of America’s workforce, yet their unemployment rate is more than twice that of workers without disabilities. It is crucial that American employers continue to make efforts to hire workers of all backgrounds and abilities.

For 113 years, Goodwill has worked tirelessly to support job seekers with disabilities and specialized circumstances through training, placement and employment efforts. The Goodwill 2015 Achiever of the Year and Kenneth Shaw Graduate of the Year award recipients exemplify the benefits of Goodwill’s employment programs and highlight the achievements of both those currently enrolled and those who have gone on to independent success.

Earlier this year, Goodwill, Serving the People of Southern Los Angeles County (SOLAC) awarded its Graduate of the Year award to Carmel Goodwin, who thrives in her job as a sales associate and material handler, regardless of her developmental disability. When she was first hired at Goodwill in 2005, she was quite reticent and rarely interacted with customers. But as she gained more job experience and her confidence grew, she began communicating with staff, even addressing customers when they needed assistance. Today, Carmel, who also has medaled as a gymnast for the Special Olympics, is considered one of the store’s most productive material handlers. Click here to view a video about Carmel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q11sSsXKMTs>

“Supporting the needs of job seekers of varying needs and abilities is at the core of what we do at Goodwill every day,” said Janet McCarthy, President and CEO of Goodwill SOLAC. “We are so pleased to celebrate the achievements of Goodwill program participants, and all employees with disabilities, during National Disability Employment Awareness Month.”

For more information about how your donations help us support employees with disabilities in obtaining meaningful employment, visit [www.ThinkGood.org](http://www.ThinkGood.org).

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).