

# Goodwill Industries Develops Jobs - and Hope - Across New York

Following is the sixteenth in our series of profiles of New York City corporations and organizations that contract with the City's Department of Employment to provide career counseling, job training and job placement services to City residents.



Martha Gonzalez/Goodwill Industries

Wilberto Alvarez, winner of a national Goodwill award for outstanding program graduates, oversees a New York City Goodwill Industries contract, splicing cable for Con Edison.

To most New Yorkers, Goodwill Industries of Greater New York is the ubiquitous presence in thrift shops around the City.

What few people know is that since 1915 the organization has been helping individuals with disabilities and other special needs find employment and, in the process, instilling in them a quality of self-reliance that may ordinarily have remained beyond their reach.

"Our programs to bring people into mainstream employment have had an effect on more than 20,000 New Yorkers, including those with severe physical, emotional and mental disabilities," said Rex L. Davidson, Goodwill Industries executive director. "Goodwill knows that a hand up has far more lasting value than a handout."

Disabled job seekers find work through Goodwill's Rehabilitation Services program, run by Linda Turner.

Overseeing Rehabilitation Services' Supported Employment program, Ed-



Goodwill Industries Executive Director Rex L. Davidson (r.) and Lawrence Gloeckler, deputy commissioner of VESID (Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities), frequently work together on employment programs for job seekers with disabilities.



Rico Rendon

Michelle Bashant learned the retail trade by working in one of Goodwill's stores.

mund O'Donnell and his staff last year helped place 60 disabled persons in permanent jobs that pay up to \$14 per hour. With a strong team of job coaches, O'Donnell's program takes on the daily challenge of New Yorkers with various disabilities. Through the coaches' dedication, employers are assured that their new workers will perform as well, often better, than many without a disability. "Job coaches are available to our clients 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to help them acclimate to their new responsibilities and to address employer concerns. Their devotion to seeing our clients succeed never fails to inspire me," commented O'Donnell.

Integral to Goodwill's daily activities, some cooperating employers take a leadership role in creating job opportunities for disabled persons. It's a spirit that is typically expressed in the actions of Larry Zogby, president of Manhattan-based RDS Delivery Service Co. The firm employs more than 50 couriers,

most of whom were referred to RDS by Goodwill, where they were originally sent by New York State's office of VESID - Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals With Disabilities. Zogby says that his unconventional hires have actually improved his business: "My turnover rate has been cut in half and productivity has increased across the board. The people I hire from Goodwill Industries are motivated, reliable, hard-working and take pride in the company. They've helped heighten morale and maximize efficiency."

Other New York City employers who are profiting from Goodwill's longstanding job development program include Sears, Food Emporium, Hallmark Card, Pfizer, Con Edison, the Gap, Banana Republic and the New York City Board of Education.

## Services Are "More Relevant Than Ever"

In addition to its work on behalf of the disabled, Goodwill runs many Welfare-to-Work initiatives, a one-stop neighborhood career development center in the Bronx, programs of immigrant and refugee assistance, a family learning center in Queens and services for New York City youth.

"The men and women who founded Goodwill Industries almost 100 years ago could not have imagined New York City as it exists today," said Bill Forrester, the organization's deputy executive director. "Yet the

simple principles on which Goodwill was founded are more relevant to the communities we serve than ever before."

With funding from New York City's Department of Employment, Goodwill administers the Bronx Neighborhood Career Development Center, which provides employment and referral services to thousands of City residents each year. Of that number, the VESID office provides educational and vocational rehabilitative services to those participants with disabilities.

Goodwill also conducts a Refugee Social Services Program that is funded by the Private Industry Council of New York City. The program provides direct placement assistance to the City's refugee and immigrant populations; it served more than 200 participants and placed 168 individuals in jobs last year. Goodwill's new GoodTemps program, which sends more than 450 workers into competitive market-rate jobs every day, capitalizes on the trend toward temporary employment services and recognizes their potential to develop into full time jobs. ■



Larry Zogby, president of RDS Delivery Service Co., and one of his couriers, Sheryl Orlansky. Zogby found more than 50 of his employees through Goodwill Industries, where they arrived after being referred from the New York State VESID office.



Of the employees he has identified and hired through Goodwill, RDS President Larry Zogby says, "They've helped heighten morale and maximize efficiency... My turnover rate has been cut in half and productivity has increased across the board."