

A WEEK IN *Learning*

INTRODUCING GOODWILL'S DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COUNCIL

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Edgar Helms, a Methodist minister from Boston, founded Goodwill in 1902. As he began his work, he challenged his colleagues and his neighbors to “Be dissatisfied with your work until every person in your community has an opportunity to develop to their fullest usefulness and enjoy a maximum of abundant living.” Today, we carry on Helms’ work - striving to recognize and support “every person.”

In 2020, we have seen a renewed interest in - and commitment to - social justice efforts throughout our country. This is important work, and involves the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion (often abbreviated as DEI). I have always been proud to work for Goodwill, because a commitment to DEI is “hardwired” into how we operate. Last week, our organization demonstrated our commitment to this idea by launching our first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council. I was thrilled to be a part of the kickoff event, and would like to use this space to explain the purpose and objectives of the Council - and to introduce its members.

Purpose

It’s important to understand that our new DEI Council was not established to provide something that was missing from Goodwill. Rather, it was built to ensure that we are fulfilling our commitment to the development of “every person in our community” in the most effective way possible. Specifically, the Council’s purpose is to *build an inclusive workplace that is representative of the humankind that we strive to build as a company and to inspire in future generations.*

Objectives

As the council begins its work, they will be guided by two primary objectives. First, they will be working to build company-wide DEI strategies and programs that ensure we continue to build our culture of respect. Second, they will help to ensure that all DEI programs are well-balanced with our Goodwill mission and business needs.

Council Members

As part of our kickoff event, we asked each new Council member to explain why they were committed to DEI work and what they hope to achieve. Their responses are provided below. I hope that you will find them as interesting, enlightening, and inspiring as I have.

Diana Byers, Retail District Manager

I wanted to be part of the DEI Council - with an emphasis on Hispanic culture - for a few reasons: Moving to Arizona from the east coast, I experienced culture shock. The dominant culture in the Hispanic community in Phoenix was Mexican. I did not fit the mold. I was Puerto Rican with a New York City accent. I want to bring awareness of the vast diversity among Hispanic cultures, to celebrate the differences and similarities of these groups. I want to be a role model, to show that success is possible no matter what race or culture you come from, and that ceilings can be shattered.

Larry Cruse, Asset Protection Manager

I have worked in a lot of different fields, and each organization has its own “comfort” levels for members of the LGBTQ community. I remember the first year I lived here, I didn’t go to “Zoo Lights” because I was worried somebody would find out that I had a husband and not a wife. There should never be a time when someone in our organization feels that way.

I wanted to get involved with the DEI Council for two reasons, and the first is education. For those who are not familiar with the LGBTQ community, education is a really big part of it. And I am looking forward to getting involved in that type of learning effort. Second, I really want to work directly with people that are part of the organization that might be worried about elements of their job because of their background. I want these people to be comfortable in the organization. When we had the One Retreat in 2019, I ran into several managers who did not feel comfortable sharing all parts of their identity - they were still “in the closet.” I want to help us, as an organization, become a place where we can all be comfortable sharing who we are. I think the DEI Council will provide a great way to allow everybody to feel at home at Goodwill.

Lea Graham, Sr. Manager of Marketing

There is so much more that needs to happen for women to truly feel equal in the workplace, and I’m most passionate about doing what I can to be a part of making that progress. It’s important for me today, and I care so much about helping to move things forward so that my young daughter will one day get to go to work in a world where the concerns of today are in the past. I look forward to this opportunity to connect more with my Goodwill teammates for this effort.

Vicki Johnson, Supervisor, Legal & Compliance

The topic of people with disabilities is rather special to me. I do not identify as a person with a disability, though many people assume that I do. This is due to the fact that I walk with a very obvious limp.

During my lifetime I have been disqualified and excluded from certain things just from the sheer fact that I walk a little differently. This has brought forth many emotions, including sadness, embarrassment and anger.

I cannot imagine what it is like for those individuals who do identify as having a disability who are not given a chance because of their uniqueness. I am hoping to bring down some stereotypical walls and shine a positive light on the subject.

Andrea R. Longoria, Sr. Learning and Development Consultant

I volunteered to be part of the DEI Council because I believe in the work that we do. I have always believed that I was born to be a “Helper”. For me, that means putting your strengths and skills towards helping others become the best versions of themselves. Ultimately, I want our DEI council to make our communities, our families, and the people we serve feel like there is hope for a meaningful and self-sustaining future, no matter what obstacles they may face. I have a passion for people, a passion to empower and a passion to share my experiences and gifts with the world. I would have liked the same support when I was growing up. It is important to me to be the voice for those who may not have one.

Ron Mack, Sr. Community Awareness Partner

It’s extremely important for me to be able to have the opportunity to have a voice and show my passion towards creating a more equal and fair treatment of ALL marginalized communities.

I understand that embracing cultural diversity is crucial for Goodwill to ensure that we are incorporating unique viewpoints and are speaking to a global audience. As a company, we must understand that even if a company is thriving, having a lack of diverse employees will inhibit that company’s growth. I want to make sure that we are doing all we can to bring in diverse and talented individuals to continue to grow - It’s very critical that Goodwill include diversity at every level of the company, especially in leadership roles.

Aimee McIntosh, Senior Director, Enterprise Program Management Office

I have been an advocate for diversity and equity for the last 30 years, in both my personal and professional life. Growing up, I saw two sides of the coin - acceptance and racism. Having an African-American stepfather provided me with the chance to have conversations about equality. Having a best friend with a son who has Down’s Syndrome - and having friends in the LGBTQ community have both given me openings to have conversations about DEI issues.

I’m here because I want to celebrate diversity. We all deserve a seat at the table because we all bring something unique to the table.

Next Steps

In January, the Council will meet for the first time. One of the first things they will do is launch “Action” Groups around specific DEI areas of interest. These groups will be open to all Goodwill team members (with approval from your manager), so be on the lookout for instructions about how to get involved!