

A WEEK IN *Learning*

MISSION DRIVEN – DATA INFORMED

Katrina Thurman, Vice President of Mission Development

We are lucky to work for Goodwill. That is true for all the usual reasons: great company culture, good benefits, great co-workers, and strong leadership. But the story just gets better.

Over a century ago, a Methodist minister recognized that the only way to really help members of his community move out of poverty was through the dignity and power of work. A job. Not a handout but a hand up. I say a big ‘thank you’ to Reverend Edgar J. Helms every time I pause to remember the true brilliance of the Goodwill movement he started: take things that people no longer need, sell them to someone who does need them, create employment opportunities in the short term and life changing social service programs in the long run.

Most nonprofit, mission-driven organizations spend their time asking for money so that they can help people move out of poverty. However, Helms devised a way for us to make our own money. He wanted us to live and breathe the values we hope to instill in our clients; self-sufficiency through hard work every day. Fast forward to the way our Goodwill operates today and we have brought together the best of both worlds: maximize **profits** in order to maximize **impact**.

“In large systems, it’s easy to inadvertently optimize for cost, number of people served, simplicity, or throughput, but not to focus on what really matters: the experience of the individuals and families who are impacted by poverty and have no reasonable way out.” Diana Dollar, President, The Prosperity Agenda



“What if we can really focus on counting the numbers and on changing lives?”

- **Katrina Thurman**

Typically, this statement would be accurate for large systems, like companies or governments. But what if

we look at this differently? What if we build a large, successful system like Goodwill's retail stores, and in those stores, we optimize for cost, maximize outputs, and strive to make those stores as profitable and successful as they can possibly be each minute of each day. Then – we don't stop there. We take that profit and we invest it in impacting lives, helping tens of thousands of people move out of poverty every year. What if we focus on counting the numbers and on changing lives? Goodwill has found the way to do that and strives to keep getting better at it every single day.

Our Goodwill has grown a lot in the last decade. We have grown in our stores and, therefore, in the ways we are able to help change lives and be there for people in our community when they need us the most. We are able to do that because of how much we value data. We train our team members to collect the right information and then analyze it to make decisions about how we run our retail business and how we operate our career services. We get to have it all – we get to be a mission driven AND a data informed company.

In support of this commitment, our Goodwill has started building a new structure to support how we serve our mission. Led by our Chief Mission Officer (Jackie Halleen), we now have Mission Services teams - one in Arizona and one in Maryland. To make sure that those teams have all the information and tools they need, we have established a **Mission Development** department.

Mission Development team members are tasked with making sure that we have the right data and programs in place to serve our communities now and to make sure that we are ready for the future. We will be helping to design and build exciting new services like the Excel Center high school diploma program for adults, or the Opportunity Center campus where we create a one-stop solution for our clients as they work their way from poverty to prosperity. Our team gets to play a very exciting part of what all of us at Goodwill want: to work hard each day in service to a community that needs us to be excellent, to be data-informed, and to always be mission driven.

Now that you have heard more about Goodwill's growing story, take a minute to think through the following:

- Which aspect(s) of our work leaves you feeling the most excited, inspired, and motivated?
- How do you and your team use data, information, reports or projections about the future to accomplish your goals every day?

Together, we can fulfill our vision. We can end poverty through the power of work.