



GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF NORTH LOUISIANA, INC.

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2005 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

A CROSSROADS IN LIFE

In 2003, Goodwill Industries of North Louisiana, Inc. (NLAGI) decided to undertake a new strategy to help parents in Greater Shreveport achieve economic stability. By banding together with more than 300 community partners and potential employers, Goodwill created an effective “umbrella” of resources that could quickly link parents with job training programs, employment opportunities and a range of community services.

The staff could not foresee what the new program, Crossroads, would soon mean to Gulf Coast families fleeing Katrina’s devastation in the fall of 2005. As an exodus of families, many separated from one another, looked for someone to turn to and somewhere to call home, employees and volunteers alike put in long hours—some working 40 days straight—to handle in-take and help families find shelters and basic services. At the heart of these efforts, the Crossroads program proved the key to success.



WHEN THESE FAMILIES ARE AT THE
‘CROSSROADS’ OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY,
THIS PROGRAM ENABLES THEM TO CONCEIVE
OF, BELIEVE IN AND ACHIEVE SUCCESS.

—John M. Rankin, President and CEO, Goodwill Industries of North Louisiana, Inc.

ANTICIPATING NEEDS

“We could not have served these parents and their children without Crossroads,” says Romney Firor, NLAGI’s vice president for workforce development. “In two months, we were able to support as many families as we had in the previous year.”

The program’s strong network of community connections allowed Goodwill to organize the very first job fair for evacuees less than two weeks after Katrina. More than 100 employers attended, and 60 parents were hired on the spot, taking the first step in rebuilding their families’ lives. In all, some 300 families found new homes and a place to start over through Crossroads.

Just as the program does for the extremely low-income families it serves in Caddo and Bossier Parishes, it helped Katrina evacuees work toward long-term goals once their immediate needs were met. Parents were able to take advantage of GEAR-UP, Crossroads’ training component for strengthening financial literacy skills and linking parents directly to job training and placement services, while their children learned skills and gained confidence through the program’s youth development activities.

“Many families displaced by Katrina are now deciding to stay in Shreveport,” Firor explains. “The Crossroads program will be there to help them, so that their families can find stability and success in the community they now call home.”

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Goodwill Industries International, the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize Goodwill member agencies with outstanding programs that work to give children what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.

In 2005, Goodwill Industries International provided job training and career development services for nearly 850,000 individuals, many of whom are parents. These parents often benefit from other local Goodwill programs, such as Crossroads, aimed at stabilizing and strengthening families. "These local member agencies are expanding on our core mission of helping individuals overcome barriers to find and retain employment," says George W. Kessinger, Goodwill Industries International president and CEO. "We work to place parents in permanent employment, because we want to help them become more effective in meeting their families' needs. When you support a parent, you support the entire family and the community where they live."

GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF NORTH LOUISIANA, INC.

Award-winning Program: Crossroads

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