



GOODWILL INDUSTRIES

OF SAN FRANCISCO, SAN MATEO
AND MARIN COUNTIES

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

2005 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

SECOND CHANCES

The challenges faced by low-income parents in providing for their families become nearly insurmountable when first-time drug offenses result in felony convictions. Automatically, convicted parents become ineligible for critical supports, such as welfare, public housing and food stamps. Seeking to strengthen very vulnerable families, Goodwill Industries of San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin Counties has created a pathway that gives these parents a second chance.

Back on Track, a Goodwill program, leverages the support of the San Francisco District Attorney and offers first-time, low-level narcotics offenders a chance to keep their families moving forward. On the D.A.'s recommendation, courts suspend sentences of offenders who plead guilty, meet Back on Track's rigid screening criteria and commit to Personal Responsibility Plans, supported through a year of Goodwill career development and counseling. Among the 5,000 such cases on the city's court dockets each year, Goodwill gives highest priority to low-income parents.



BY OFFERING AN ALTERNATIVE TO PRISON,
WE STABILIZE FAMILIES AND HELP THE
JUSTICE SYSTEM SUPPORT FAMILIES AS WELL.

—Deborah Alvarez-Rodriguez, President and CEO, Goodwill Industries of San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin Counties

A NATIONAL MODEL

The first program of its kind to win a district attorney's endorsement, Back on Track puts parents on career paths so they can provide for their children through jobs rather than street money. Instead of serving time, these young parents begin serving their families' needs as they take advantage of Goodwill's GED courses, job training, legal aid, counseling and family support services. Participants give back to their neighborhoods through mandatory community service.

In Back on Track, the quality of family life is essential. Staff work with parents of young children to ensure they grow in their roles, developing the skills and confidence to be effective caregivers. If participants have child support obligations, Back on Track works with the Department of Child Support to ensure participants are meeting this requirement.

Back on Track also convenes monthly meetings of up to 40 participants—helping them grow together, as they work toward “graduation” and a clean record. “They talk about everything from street law to parenting skills,” says program manager Judy Siff. “But what they're building is self-esteem and a capacity to rise above their mistakes and become role models for their families. After all, their Personal Responsibility Plans are really family strengthening plans.”

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 Back on Track, 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.”

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Award-winning Program: Back on Track

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