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 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/EASTER SEALS MINNESOTA

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# GOODWILL/ EASTER SEALS MINNESOTA

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

2006 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

## FULL FAMILY FOCUS

Since 1919, Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota assists people with barriers to education, employment and independence in achieving their goals. In recent years, a focus on the needs of whole families has imbued and expanded its programs.

In rural Willmar, Minnesota, the GOALS program works with "street" youth who articulate their own goals for self-transformation as they seek to adopt a more mainstream lifestyle and realize profound changes in material, emotional and social behaviors. They make "contracts" to achieve these goals which may include completing school, securing employment, finding safe day care for their children and other actions that may improve their chances for long-term success. The FATHER (Fostering Actions To Help Earnings and Responsibility) Project works with noncustodial fathers to make a positive difference in their children's lives. Step by step, Goodwill/Easter Seals helps these fathers establish paternity, request visitation rights and set up child support payment plans. A "Parents as Teachers" component, in which fathers help fathers, strengthens parenting skills and prepares the men to build healthy relationships with their children.

WE CAN HELP A PARENT FIND A JOB, BUT THAT'S NOT ENOUGH. WE WANT THE WHOLE FAMILY—ESPECIALLY THE CHILDREN—TO BE BETTER OFF FIVE, 10, 15 YEARS FROM NOW. THAT'S WHY WE FOCUS ON THE FULL FAMILY.

—Michael Wirth-Davis, President and CEO, Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota

## A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Consider the case of Justin. Recently released from prison, Justin didn't have a high school diploma or job prospects. What he did have was a wife and four children. Goodwill/Easter Seals linked Justin to General Equivalency Degree preparation and training in the construction trades, so that a job would also mean a career path and benefits for his family. The agency helped Justin and his wife locate affordable day care so Justin's wife could work. Now the couple can create a better future for their children.

Goodwill/Easter Seals has often turned to partnerships to serve families from diverse cultures and neighborhoods. In 2004, the agency partnered with Minneapolis Community and Technical College and the city's Neighborhood Development Center to open the Business and Career Center, where parents can find employment and education services delivered in English, Spanish, Hmong, Somali and Oromo. Collaboration with the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches resulted in the Center for Families to help immigrant families find solid ground in a new homeland. The Families Forward Project, a collaboration of 18 agencies throughout the state, turns to Goodwill/Easter Seals for its expertise in skills training for parents.

"You have to see life through the eyes of a parent," says Kelly Matter, Vice President for Program Services. "If you can do that, you will find the resources and partners to meet that family's needs."

## 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.