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## ***For Immediate Release***

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## **Goodwill's services and training programs help vitalize Arizona's workforce**

**PHOENIX, Ariz. (Oct. 16, 2007)** — As the nation commemorates the eighteenth National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Goodwill of Central Arizona honors the contributions and accomplishments of Arizonans with disabilities and is proud to support them through our job skills programs and career resources. Resources such as Goodwill's Career Centers, rehabilitation services and youth services provide exceptional skills training and employment services to those with disadvantaging conditions or physical, emotional or other barriers to employment.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, an estimated 32.5 million Americans live with severe disabilities. Despite misconceptions to the contrary, people with disabilities constitute a more secure and stable workforce than what many employers commonly see. "Arizonans with disabilities fortify our workforce and their successes keep our economy competitive by utilizing a relatively untapped labor pool," said Lisa Wilham, vice president of Workforce Development and Commercial Services for Goodwill of Central Arizona. "We believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to learn, work, and achieve their greatest potential."

Goodwill's School-to-Work transition program within its rehabilitation services, has been providing vocational education services to special education students for 28 years, which makes it the longest standing program within the organization. Students, ages 16 to 22, learn work skills and gain experience through training in the Goodwill retail store setting. These services are provided to students from Phoenix Union, Chino Valley and

Humboldt Unified school districts. So far this year, 71 students have gone through training, with three moving directly into community-based jobs.

Goodwill is acquiring a new assistive technology station for its Phoenix career center, located at 417 N. 16<sup>th</sup> St. The station, complete with a larger monitor, track ball mouse, larger-keyed keyboard, and zoom text screen reader, will allow users with disabilities to enjoy a more thorough experience and for individuals who cannot type - to use an interactive voice program to control the computer. Goodwill's career centers provide a place where job seekers can go to receive assistance in securing a job, which includes labor market information, community resources, career fairs and web access.

Goodwill Youth Services programs provide comprehensive year-round services that assist youth ages 14 to 21 with barriers to employment. Currently, these programs provide leadership development, education assistance, occupational skills training and other services to over 1,000 youth with disabilities. Giving youth the opportunity to change their lives through the power of work betters the future for the whole community. Goodwill recognizes the need to give youth the opportunity to succeed and collaborates with community partners to help youth adults overcome their barriers to employment.

Goodwill also partners with federally-operated AbilityOne – the nation's single largest provider of employment opportunities for those who are either blind or have severe disabilities. At Goodwill, AbilityOne contracts provide transitional and long-term employment that benefits both the worker and the economy. Workers in the program during 2006, developed skills to increase their independence, and earned a salary average of \$9.99 per hour, and received health benefits. Just as importantly, these workers become taxpaying citizens who contribute to the economic vitality of their communities and the nation.

Celebrating 60 years in the Valley, Goodwill of Central Arizona is one of the oldest and largest non-profit agencies in Arizona. Our mission is to "Put People to Work" throughout Arizona by providing job training and career services to those with vocational disadvantages that can include physical and emotional barriers, welfare dependency, illiteracy and age. In 2006, we served 10,000 youth and adults on their quest toward self-sufficiency and placed more than 2,300 into competitive employment. For more information on Goodwill of Central Arizona visit [www.goodwillaz.org](http://www.goodwillaz.org).

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