



Goodwill METRO
Southern Arizona YOUTH PROGRAM

Press Release

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GRAD SOLUTIONS

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Goodwill® offers Online H.S. Diploma through Grad Solutions partnership

February 22, 2019 (Tucson, AZ) – For those who do not complete high school, have been involved or currently involved with the Juvenile Justice system, getting back into a traditional classroom may be a challenge. One's first instinct may be to encourage youth to pursue a GED. But studies* show that those with a high school diploma demonstrate better outcomes (increase in wages, decrease in college dropout rates, and employability), Goodwill® sought to provide access to a high school diploma to its youth and young adults participants.

After a successful pilot of Grad Solutions' online high school services at Goodwill's Metro/REC Youth program site at 300 N. 4th Ave., in downtown Tucson, Goodwill® and Graduation Solutions, LLC signed an agreement in December 2018 to collaborate on academic services. Now, Goodwill® offers both GED and high school diploma options for youth and young adult participants, ages 16 to 21 years old.

The high school diploma option works well for some individuals, especially those who may have just a few credits to earn their diploma. Grad Solutions allows them to pick up where they left off, as well as providing accommodations for youth who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Students who take their courses at Metro/REC have access to computers and technology, tutoring, and individualized on-site support, not just for academics but career planning as well.

Grad Solutions currently has 1,500 students enrolled statewide, 200 of them in Pima County. "Pima County is where we need to be," said Rich Becker, Director of Business Development for Grad Solutions. "There are 21,000 Opportunity Youth in Pima County. That's why partnering with Goodwill's Metro program has been so helpful. They are plugged into the community; they have a great reputation among the youth."

The Metro/REC Youth Program's goal is to connect out-of-school and/or unemployed Opportunity Youth (OY) ages 16-24 with community resources, educational opportunities, and career pathways. Participants also receive incentives for reaching academic related goals, receiving an industry-recognized credential, and attending workshops and community service-learning events.

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Most youth and young adult participants seek services from Metro through referrals from their peers. The Grad Solutions program can also help fulfill the education requirements for Juvenile Justice involved youth. “We serve a lot of youth coming out of the juvenile justice system and most of them don’t want to return back into a classroom setting,” said Lance Meeks, Metro/REC Program Manager. “Grad Solutions gives them the flexibility to complete their high school diploma on their time – so they can work and provide for their family, and go to school at the same time. Their work experience helps them earn elective credits too.”

Grad Solutions students have found success in this program, with 90% moving on to post-secondary education. The online high school will also be adding AP and Honors courses in the near future. “We love the access Grad Solutions provides for our youth and young adults,” said Liz Gulick, Co-President/CEO of Goodwill® Industries of Southern Arizona. “The successes that Grad Solutions have had with its past students are the same successes we want our youth to realize. The fact that we can offer both GED preparation and high school diploma options is a win for the people we serve. We are very excited about this new partnership.”

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**US Bureau of Labor Statistics*

Goodwill® Industries of Southern Arizona is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Tax ID: 86-0223401
Since 1969, Goodwill® Industries of Southern Arizona has provided a “hand up” for any person who wants to realize their potential through education and employment. Goodwill’s mission to provide jobs and training for people to gain skills and achieve independence through its 12 youth and adult programs. In the past five years, Goodwill® has been able to serve over 50,000 individuals in Southern Arizona. Goodwill accomplishes its mission and provides these services at no cost to the individuals served because of the sale of generously donated items from the community. In 2019, Goodwill® Industries of Southern Arizona is celebrating its 50-year anniversary in Southern Arizona. Find out more at www.GoodwillSouthernAZ.org.

Graduation Solutions, LLC was founded in 2012 and believes that every student has the ability to graduate high school. Grad Solutions does this through personalized instruction, individual mentoring, excellent curriculum, flexibility and collaboration. Graduation Solutions is an Educational Management Organization that is co-accredited by Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, a regional agency and Accreditation International. Learn more at www.iwantmydiploma.com.