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## NEWS RELEASE

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### GOODWILL COMMEMORATES 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

PITTSBURGH, Pa., July 19, 2010 – For decades, Goodwill® has been helping people with disabilities find employment, become independent and support themselves and their families. Since the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990, it has helped to increase access to goods and services such as employment opportunities for people with disabilities, and to prohibit employment discrimination.

Although individuals with disabilities have benefited from this law, they still face challenges to finding jobs and becoming independent. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, unemployment among people with disabilities is more than 14 percent, compared to 9.4 percent for people without disabilities. And, according to the ADA National Network, there are more than 54 million people – nearly one in six Americans – who have some form of physical or mental impairment that substantially limits their daily activities, including working, walking, seeing, hearing or caring for themselves.

“Despite their challenging circumstances, people with disabilities have unique skills and talents that add to the diversity and vitality of a workplace,” said Michael J. Smith, President/CEO of Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania. “Employees with disabilities also have been proven to have high retention rates, good productivity levels, and above-average attendance and safety records compared to other employees.”

Mr. Smith pointed out that many people with disabilities need little to no special accommodation to do their jobs, and advances in technology are helping to increase productivity for all kinds of workers, including those with disabilities.

(more)

The Assistive Technology (AT) Program that Goodwill SWPA created in 2007 stands out among the many special services that Goodwill agencies around the country offer to help people with disabilities become independent and participate fully in their communities.

“Our program promotes awareness and offers services related to assistive equipment, job accommodations, and accessibility,” Mr. Smith said. “AT includes assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices and the processes used in selecting, locating and using them.”

Examples of AT include videophones for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and hardware such as a trackball or software such as a screen reader that make computers accessible to people who have difficulty using their hands or who have vision impairments.

“Goodwill’s AT Program provides individualized assessments to determine what aids or accommodations can help people with disabilities complete their activities most comfortably and independently,” Mr. Smith said. “They can also try equipment from our inventory to see if it fits their lifestyle and meets their needs.”

The program serves as a Microsoft Accessibility Resource Center, helping individuals learn how to increase their computers’ ease of use. It is also a volunteer center for Pennsylvania’s Telecommunications Device Distribution Program, which provides free accessible telecommunication equipment – such as large print and captioned telephones – to eligible individuals with disabilities

“The AT Program is one important way we help our friends and neighbors with disabilities build their careers and improve their lives,” Mr. Smith said. “We all must look past the disabilities and remember that each person is an individual capable of making a positive contribution to the community.”

Goodwill SWPA joins with Goodwill agencies throughout the nation in commemorating and celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA.

*For more information about Goodwill’s Assistive Technology services for individuals and employers, contact Adrienne Tolentino, Assistive Technology Specialist, at 412-390-2445 or [adrienne.tolentino@goodwillswpa.org](mailto:adrienne.tolentino@goodwillswpa.org).*

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