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NEWS RELEASE

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GOODWILL OF SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA'S REINTEGRATION PROGRAM RECEIVES NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT COUNSELING ASSOCIATION AWARD

PITTSBURGH, March 16, 2010 – Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania's Community Reintegration program will be honored by the National Employment Counseling Association (NECA) during a special awards program on March 21, 2010. The Awards Program is part of NECA's annual "Day of Learning" workforce professional development training Academy at the Westin Hotel in Pittsburgh.

Goodwill's Community Reintegration Program addresses the essential needs and employment skill development for reintegration of ex-offenders from the Allegheny County Jail who strive to return to their communities and families. Patty Trainer, Goodwill of SWPA's Chief Operating Officer, will address the workforce development professionals, and accept the award on behalf of the agency. Ms. Trainer was instrumental in conceptualizing and developing the Goodwill SWPA reintegration model.

A panel of Goodwill of SWPA representatives recently briefed Congress, policy makers, and stakeholders about their experience in serving ex-offenders by helping this population make productive contributions and become reintegrated into their families and their communities. The Reintegration Program is part of an effort with the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative, working with inmates prior to their release and continuing to provide a range of assessments and services in areas such as job readiness, wellness, family, basic life needs and housing.

Mike Olack, Goodwill's Director of the Community Reintegration, states, "We try not to give any tangible items to the ex-offender, but instead educate them on how to provide for themselves and their families."

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NECA President Sue Pressman states, “The program is a solution to turn former criminal background barriers into opportunities for employment in the community, and most importantly, to help this population survive the economic meltdown and navigate the rough seas of employment.” The program’s message is similar to that of NECA’s social justice work on alleviating injustice and oppression, and particularly for those who may be marginalized due to employment issues.

“We are pleased to be able to recognize the achievements of the Reintegration Program of Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania,” says NECA Awards Chair Rita Freeborough of Pennsylvania. “NECA shares Goodwill’s position that training people to find jobs not only benefits those individuals and their employers, but also strengthens families and entire communities.”

Individuals interested in meeting Ms. Trainer and hearing the story of Goodwill’s Community Reintegration Program (including the reaction from the Congressional briefing) can still go to the NECA website (www.employmentcounseling.org) to register for the NECA Day of Learning Academy & Awards Brunch.

Drs. Sue Pressman and Robert Chope will kick off the Day of Learning with practical ideas for organizations to retain their best people. Other featured speakers include: Dr. Michael Lazarchick bringing his “Nation at Work” up-to-the-minute analyses and resource information, Kimberly Key explaining the gender pay gap with a new and different slant, and finally, Drs. Roberta Neault and Kay Brawley, with Tom Ayala giving NECA leaders and participants the opportunity to be introduced to the Bridging/Fast Track training of the NBCC/CCE-approved online Working Ahead, Moving Forward™ Global Career Development Facilitator Training for Instructors.

NECA, an autonomous division of the American Counseling Association, is celebrating its 44th anniversary as one of the premier national organizations advocating for education, job training, a skilled workforce and a stronger economy. Leaders from programs and communities across the country come together in Pittsburgh to reflect on their groundbreaking work and plan for future advocacy on behalf of job seekers and employers. The 2010 NECA Day of Learning Academy includes a full day of intensive training on March 21. The annual event offers participants an opportunity to learn from, and network with local, state, national and international counseling and employment development leaders.

The annual NECA awards Brunch recognizes those who exemplify vision, provide unique leadership, and serve as role models for other employment and workforce professionals. Each year, at its annual conference, NECA recognizes the outstanding success of a local organization that best addresses the needs of employers and job seekers.

The NECA awards brunch takes place from 11:45 am to 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 21. For more information on NECA, contact Dr. Kay Brawley, NECA Professional Development Director, kbrawley@mindspring.com, 410.459.6282, or Dr. Sue Pressman, NECA President, sepressman@aol.com 703.536.3663.

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About Goodwill (www.goodwillswpa.org)

Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania is a diversified human service agency that is supported, in part, by its network of retail stores and other not-for-profit businesses. It serves all of southwestern Pennsylvania and manages several affiliate units and special-purpose entities, including Goodwill of Fayette County; Goodwill of North Central West Virginia; Goodwill Commercial Services, Inc.; Goodwill Residential Services, Inc.; and Goodwill Northside Common Ministries. Revenues from Goodwill stores and businesses help to fund job-training and employment-related programs and services. With over 900 employees, Goodwill SWPA serves about 100,000 people in various ways each year and helps about 2,000 people find jobs.