

From Charity to Careers: How Donations Change Lives

By Kim Praniewicz

While the economic impact of the pandemic can still be felt here in Central Florida, the pace of recovery is picking up: Theme parks are returning to full operation, hotels are reaching capacity, and restaurants are serving more diners. As that happens, there's an opportunity to reconnect thousands of Floridians with new jobs and opportunities.

What you might not know is that there's a surprisingly simple way you can help make that happen: The next time you reorganize or redecorate the house, pencil in a trip to Goodwill.

Consider these reasons that make donating a win-win:

- **Goodwill welcomes much more than just clothes.** While we'll gladly take those gently used coats, sweaters or shoes, don't stop reorganizing at the bedroom closet. Our donation centers also accept sporting goods, tools, lawn equipment (with gasoline removed), books, toys, DVDs, dishes, luggage, decorations and a wide range of furniture.
- **Goodwill accepts some broken electronics.** If your computer, laptop or cell phone goes kaput, feel free to bring it to a Goodwill donation center. Our team will check to see if we're able to refurbish it. If not, we'll recycle the batteries safely.
- **Donating is fast and convenient.** If you're a first-time donor, you might envision waiting in line or lugging heavy boxes. But all you have to do is pull up to our drop-off area, and our team will bring a cart right to your car, making it possible to donate a whole trunkful of items in just a few minutes.
- **It's good for the environment.** Donating your lightly used belongings gives them a new lease on life, keeping them out of landfills and effectively cutting their carbon footprint in half. On top of that, Goodwill does its part to reduce our own environmental impact by recycling cardboard, plastics and other items.
- **Your donation is tax-deductible — and digital.** At drop-off, you'll be asked if you want a tracking ticket that includes directions to set up an online account — which means no more hoarding paper receipts. When it's time to do your year-end tax deduction, just log in to our Donor Portal and view your complete donation history.

While donating clothing and household goods to your local Goodwill might not seem like much, the reality is that it translates to more resources and jobs for neighbors in need. Shopping at our stores is equally important because ninety cents out of every dollar in sales will go directly to our nonprofit services — and right now, that can do more good than ever.

Consider all the ways that funding goes back to the community: Through Project COMPASS, revenue from stores goes to provide one-on-one academic support and life skills education to high school students who are at risk of dropping out. At our vocational rehabilitation program, people facing obstacles to employment can gain on-the-job skills training and experience. Meanwhile, our virtual Job Connection Center offers services ranging from interview practice to certification programs, connecting thousands of Central Floridians with work every year.

The bottom line? While Central Florida is dealing with plenty of labor challenges, your donations are part of the solution. Thanks to the generosity of our neighbors, Goodwill has been able to serve this community for more than 60 years – and we look forward to continuing to pursue our mission for many years to come.

Kim Pranievicz is the vice president of marketing and mission advancement for Goodwill Industries of Central Florida.