

# **Veterans' Services**

# **2011**

Program Report

Goodwill of Central Illinois, Inc.

## **Computer Classes**

## **Forklift Training**

## **Youth Mentoring**

## **Job Placement**



## Table of Contents

<b>Goodwill Industries Vocational Services – 2011 Program Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Program Statistics – Based on Total Number of Persons Served – 1,432.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>What’s New for 2012? .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Forklift .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Overview and Program Information .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2011 Accomplishments: .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Off-Site Job Readiness.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Overview and Program Information .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>GoodGuides® .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Overview:.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Participant Satisfaction: .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2011 Accomplishments: .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Program Demographics: .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Computer – Peoria.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Overview and Program Information .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Demographics:.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2011 Accomplishments: .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Computer – Galesburg .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Overview and Program Information .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2011 Accomplishments: .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Demographics:.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Media Coverage: Goodwill Learning Center gears up to better serve .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Computer – Pekin .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Overview and Program Information .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Demographics:.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2011 Accomplishments: .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Media Coverage: New Learning Center For Pekin .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Veteran’s Services – HVRP &amp; VEAP .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Overview and Program Information .....</b>	<b>19</b>

<b>Demographics:</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>2011 Accomplishments:</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Media Coverage: Homeless Veterans Get To Stand Down</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Home for Veterans</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Overview and Program Information:</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>2011 Accomplishments:</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Media Coverage: Spc Phillip J. Pannier 3rd Annual Fallen Hero's Memorial Ride</b> .....	<b>23</b>
Event Details .....	<b>23</b>
Event Description.....	<b>23</b>
<b>Media Coverage: Van for veterans returns to duty</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>Put Illinois to Work</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Overview and Program Information</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>2011 Accomplishments:</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>e-Learning</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Overview and Program Information</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Power of Work/Job Readiness</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Overview and Program Information</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>2011 Accomplishments:</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Achiever of the Year – 2011</b> .....	<b>31</b>

## Goodwill Industries Vocational Services – 2011 Program Summary

---

Goodwill of Central Illinois offers vocational programs to serve individuals in support of our mission:

***“Supporting individuals and families who are working to better their lives”***

In 2011, Goodwill served over **1,400** individuals – veterans, youth, and individuals looking for work or seeking a better job. In 2012, we plan to expand services to veterans, to un/underemployed individuals, and reach out to more at-risk youth in the area. With the help of the central Illinois community, we will achieve our goals.

### **Veterans’ Services**

■ **Gen. Wayne A. Downing Home for Veterans** – Open in 2005, this home provides permanent supportive housing for ten homeless U.S. Military veterans with an honorable discharge and a diagnosed disability.

Total Served - 41

■ **Veterans Employment Act Program** – This program provides training, support services, and job placement opportunities for any honorably discharged U.S. Military veteran.

Total Served - 90

■ **Homeless Veterans’ Re-Entry Program** – Designed to assist homeless veterans by providing vocational training, support services, and job placement with employers in central Illinois.

Total Served - 83

### **Youth Mentoring**

■ **GoodGuides™ Youth Mentoring** – This program serves at-risk youth ages 12-17 in central Illinois by giving them a positive influence through the guidance of a trusted mentor.

Total Served - 143

## **Goodwill Learning Centers – Peoria, Galesburg, Pekin, e-Learning**

- **Computer Classes** – Instructor led classes focus on computer basics and Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowePoint), plus job readiness. Schedules for day and evening classes are posted on our website.

Total Served - 411

- **Forklift Training** – Classroom instruction and hands-on operation are included in this one-day class. OSHA Certification and a Certificate of Completion are awarded upon successful completion of the class.

Total Served - 451

- **Power of Work** – Power of Work is a class that focuses on job readiness skills to help job seekers with up-to-date information about locating and retaining employment opportunities within their skill set.

Total Served - 65

- **Put Illinois to Work** - This job placement program began in April, 2010 designed to jump-start the economy by utilizing federal and state funds to provide temporary jobs for low-income parents and young adults. Goodwill placed 563 individuals into employment in central Illinois. The program ended January 15, 2011.

Total Served - 148

---

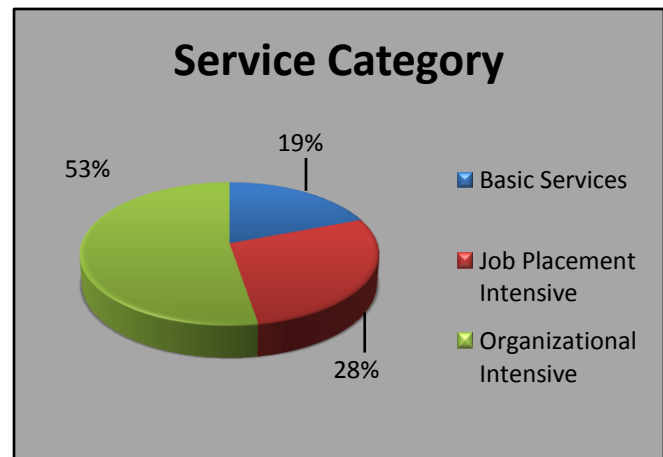
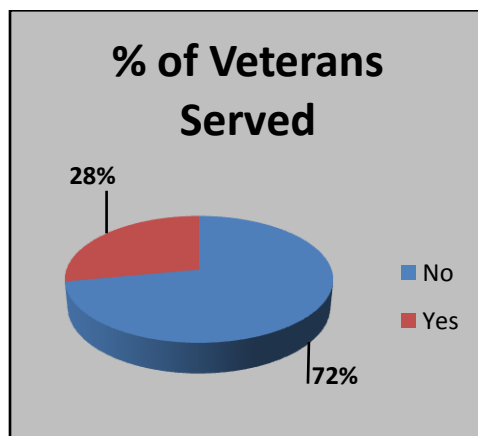
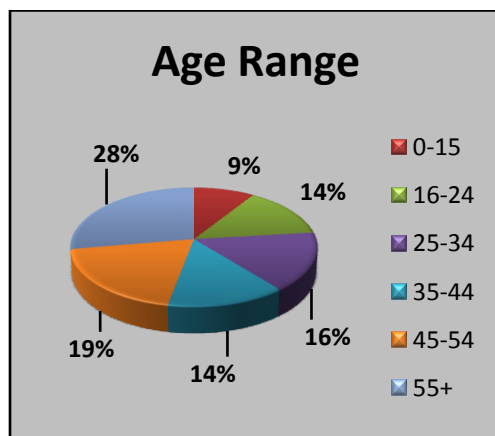
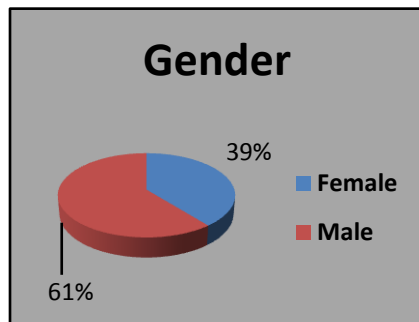
*Learn more about these Goodwill programs at [www.goodwillpeo.org](http://www.goodwillpeo.org).*

**Our Coverage Territory** - 21 counties or portions of counties throughout central Illinois: Grundy, Henderson, Knox, Livingston, Marshall, Mercer, Peoria, Putnam, Stark, Tazewell, Warren, Woodford, and portions of Ford, Champaign, Hancock, Fulton, Mason, McDonough, Bureau, LaSalle and Henry.

## **Program Statistics – Based on Total Number of Persons Served – 1,432**

Participants are classified into service category

groups depending on their level of service provided. According to the chart on the right, the largest group provided services is the Organizational Intensive Services with 53% of participants served receiving this level of service.



## What's New for 2012?

---

- Provide new services for veterans and their families
- Place more individuals into meaningful employment earning sustainable wages
- Deliver quality program material to participants
- Increase our financial resources for vocational programs (revenue) 80% by increasing grant funding
- Increase the number of vocational and training programs
- Increase our presence in the community by developing a community college partnership
- Provide exceptional services to individuals with input from community leaders.

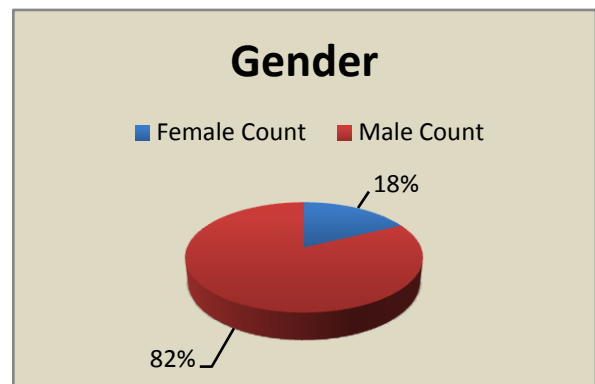
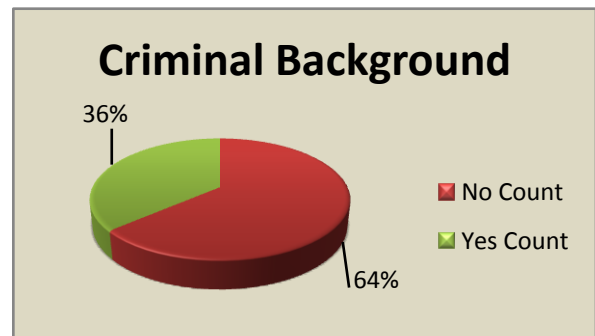
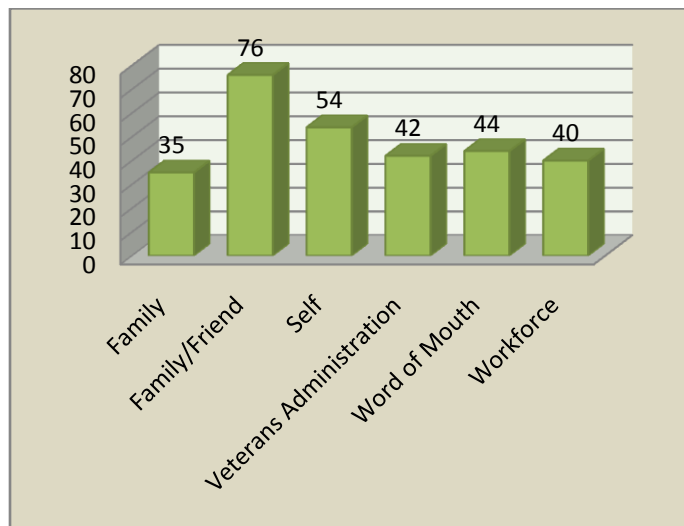
# Forklift

## Overview and Program Information

Forklift Training is a class that teaches students how to correctly and safely operate a forklift to OSHA Standards. Students will complete 6 hours of classroom and hands-on training. The class also covers interview topics such as, how to answer tough interview questions, filling out job applications, what to wear, and what to do after the interview.

December 2011 marked a significant milestone for our forklift program. 1,000 individuals were served in the last three years. Because of the popularity of the forklift class, participants tell us that they found out about the class through family and friends by word of mouth. Pat Cannon, our instructor, has also established a relationship with agencies in the area that deal with individuals having a criminal background. This has increased their chances of learning a new skill, and taking that marketable skill to an employer.

### Referral Source



### 2011 Accomplishments:

- A) We have added a new portion to the Forklift training to better serve our participants. We have now added the Propane Power truck to our training class due to the request of several customers. The stats show 75% of all warehouses use Propane Trucks in the Peoria area. This expansion will allow our participants to apply for and be qualified to operate a variety of Lift Trucks.
- B) We are now reaching out to local employers to get feedback as to what we (GOODWILL) can do to gain employment for those in our program. We visited with G&D



and demonstrated our program to them. We now have a good working relationship with G & D and they have hired some our students.

- C) We have now separated the Fork Lift program from the Job Readiness program. This allows us to spend additional time on both programs to better serve our clients and provide the “soft skills” training many individuals need to keep a job.

## Off-Site Job Readiness

---

### Overview and Program Information

Goodwill staff is teaching job readiness at the South Side Office of Concern and New Hope. The class is taught once a month at each facility.

The job readiness program covers information in relation to job searching, interviewing, and keeping a job. 75 students participated in this program during 2011.

# GoodGuides®

---

## Overview:

Goodwill GoodGuides® is a national youth mentoring initiative designed to help youth build career plans and skills as they prepare for school completion, post-secondary training, and productive work by providing structured and supportive relationships with trusted adult mentors. GII was awarded a grant from the Department of Justice, and 56 Goodwill's across the country participated and set up a program. We added two full-time employees to run our program, along with additional part-time help. The target population is youth ages 12-17, who are at-risk for juvenile delinquency or who may have already been involved in the juvenile justice system.

## Participant Satisfaction:

Over 90% of youth report satisfaction with the GoodGuides® program. Below are quotes directly from Goodwill of Central Illinois youth. The quotes are a direct indicator of the accomplishments GWCI has made with area youth.

- *"Being in the GoodGuides® program has motivated me by giving me confidence in my school work."*
- *"GoodGuides® helped me set goals in my life"*
- *"Being in the GoodGuides® program gives you a positive figure in your life that many of us need and want, but just don't have."*
- *"My mentor has taught me self control and respect."*
- *"Having a mentor has helped me deal with problems inside and outside of school."*
- *"If it wasn't for the GoodGuides® program, I probably would have headed down a terrible path in life."*
- *"This program has taught me how to be a more responsible and respectful person towards adults, including my mother."*

## 2011 Accomplishments:

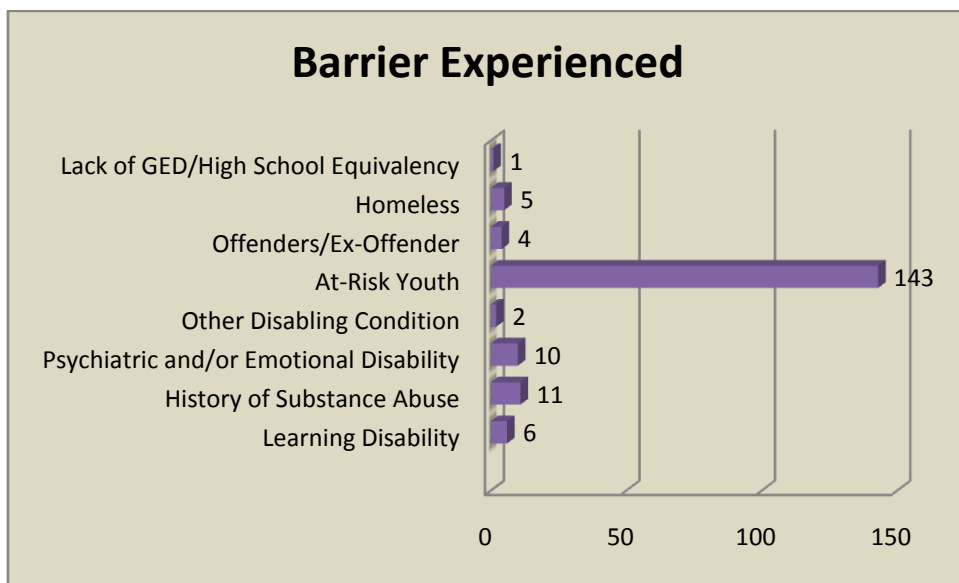
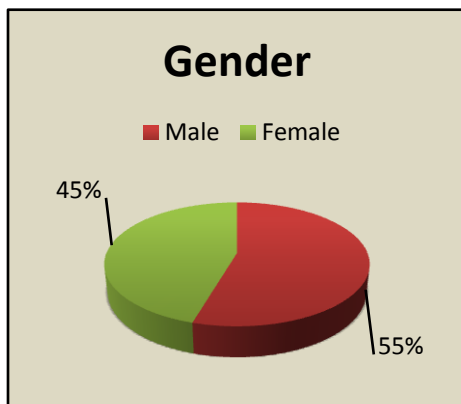
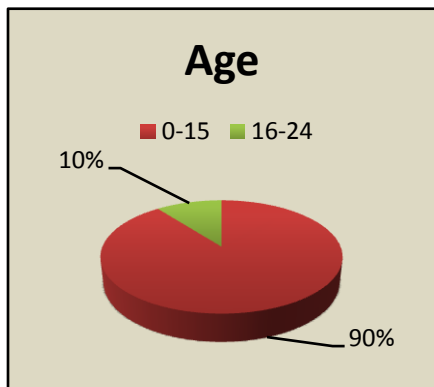
During the final term of our grant, we successfully closed out 67%, or 92 out of **138** matches were successfully completed. Schools and parents reported less absenteeism, less detention referrals, increased academic performance, increased motivation, increased self esteem, and more knowledge of how to meet their career and vocational goals. Youth reported having an increased knowledge in the diversity of careers available to them, and all their options. Seventy-nine percent of youth in the program completed at least one goal on their individual service plan. Additionally, 23% of those youth completed two or more goals.

Youth increased their career awareness in several specified fields, based on their interests and preferences. Youth completed job interviewing, tours, and job exploration activities with professionals such as teachers, veterinarians, barbers, cosmetologists, artists, nursing, counselors, military personnel, law enforcement officials, executive leaders/CEO's, accountants, medical examiners, radio broadcasters, radio producers, administrative professionals, and marketing professionals. Youth were also given the opportunity to job shadow at Radio Peoria, where they were able to witness how a radio station is managed. Youth were allowed to sit in the production studio and watch a live radio show in action. One youth also job shadowed in a veterinary clinic, where she was able to watch a procedures performed on animals.

At GWCI board meetings and our volunteer recognition event, parents gave testaments to how powerful they have felt GoodGuides® has been for their sons and daughters in the program.

One mother felt that her daughter was more motivated and focused in school. She reported that he daughter increased her grades, enabling her to be moved up from special education classes. Another mother felt that GoodGuides® gave her son direction, and a positive male role model, which he didn't have before.

### Program Demographics:



# Computer – Peoria

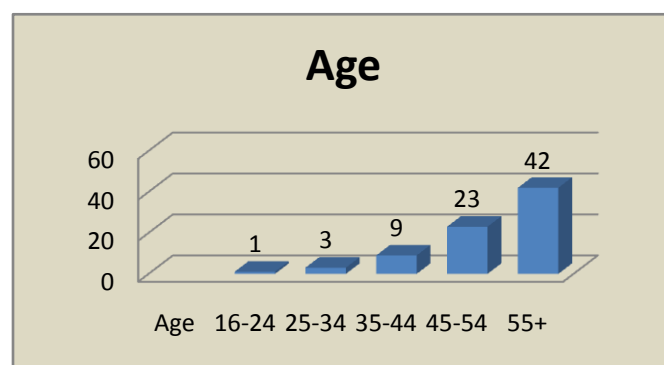
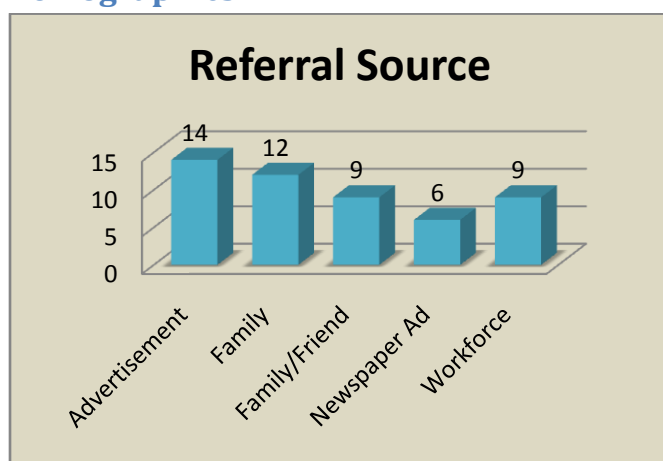
---

## Overview and Program Information

Computer classes being held at the War Memorial Learning center include: Computer Basics and Computer Skills. The Computer Skills course focuses on Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint, as well as job readiness skills curriculum. The Computer Basics course covers essential computer skills for beginning users.

An eight week computer course was taught at two different locations during the year by qualified Goodwill instructors. Courses were taught mornings at River West Library in downtown Peoria and evening classes held at Goodwill's computer lab on War Memorial Dr.

## Demographics:



## 2011 Accomplishments:

We were able to complete the move from the River West Library Branch to the Goodwill Learning Center on War Drive.

A 3 week beginning computer class was offered that began in March from 3-5 M-Th at the Goodwill Learning Center.

Completion rates for our 8 week skills class increased due to the addition of the basics class and being more selective as to which participants were selected.

# Computer – Galesburg

---

## Overview and Program Information

The Galesburg Learning Center opened in the spring of 2009 offering 8-week computer classes, then added additional courses and workshops: Computer Skills, Computer Workshops, Get Job Ready, and Money Smart. Saturday morning workshops were established to accommodate working individuals. Learning Center staff has spent considerable time in the community to network with organizations who sent students to our classes.

## 2011 Accomplishments:

In 2011 our Galesburg Vocational Center received a total make-over in the computer lab. We were able to complete a technology upgrade due to receiving partial grant funds. Then, to compliment the technology upgrade, Goodwill had carpet installed, which completely changed the entire classroom atmosphere. (See Attached Article)

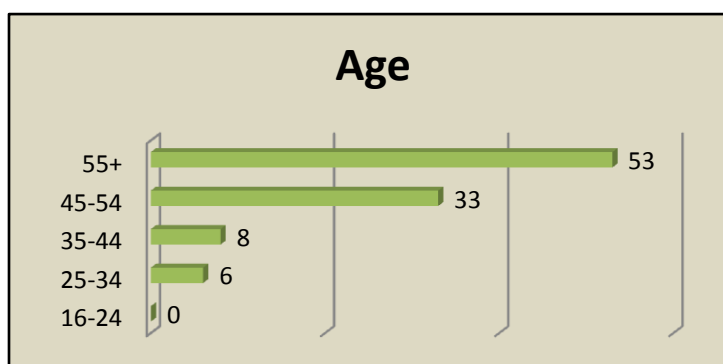
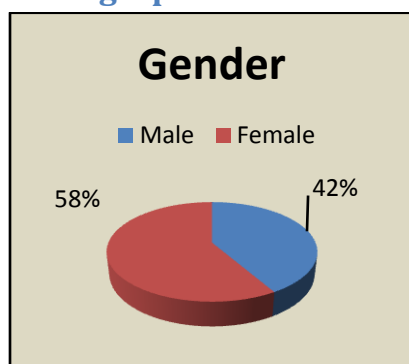
In 2011 we hosted 3 basics and 3 skills classes, as well as a set of spring workshops, an evening basics class, and a resume workshop put on for the Single Parent Program at Lutheran Social Services.

2011 marked our first CARF survey at the Galesburg Learning Center. We were able to compile reports for the past several years and were successful in pulling everything together to meet the standards and obtain accreditation.

In 2011 we were able to secure a formal partnership with Knox County Housing Authority, who we will be putting on workshops for in Early 2012.

Additionally we have been in talks with Dick Blick to provide computer training for their call center, store, and warehouse employees. The call center looks to begin utilizing our services in the first quarter of 2012. We hope this partnership will become more formal and lead into other endeavors.

## Demographics:



## Media Coverage: Goodwill Learning Center gears up to better serve

Upgrades in facility, technology kick off new year

LIZ THOMAS/The Register-Mail

Todd Sundell, a contractor for the new Goodwill Education Center, places quick dry putty on the walls in preparation for new paint.



**By ERIN MCCARTHY**  
**The Register-Mail**

Posted Jan 15, 2011 @ 01:49 PM

GALESBURG —

As the Galesburg Goodwill Learning Center prepares for another season of programs, it also is gearing up for facility and technological upgrades, all of which will help the agency better serve the community.

The Goodwill Learning Center, 1931 Grand Ave., offers a variety of free computer and job skills workshops and classes, and also serves as an open computer lab for people who are unemployed or looking to change careers.

“We want to help with the unemployment rate, getting people jobs and also the skills they need to get the job they want,” said Employment Specialist Molly Trulson. “People need to know how to navigate the computer, how to job search, how to put their resume online, and they need help with the resume and cover letter, too, so we teach those things in all our classes.”

The GLC building, formerly a motorcycle repair shop and showroom, was donated to Goodwill Industries of Central Illinois Inc. in 2005, and has served as the Galesburg Goodwill Learning Center ever since, but as the agency strives for CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) accreditation, Goodwill Director of Vocational Services Bill Bontemps said the time has come for a face-lift.

“The program in Peoria is CARF accredited, and the Galesburg program parallels that one, so it should be, too,” said Bontemps. “Part of CARF is that we had to have our facility upgraded, and that led to everything else.”

Bontemps said the upgrades include installing a rear exit and new carpeting prior to bringing in 15 new computers, the purchase of which is made possible by two \$2,500 grants from the Galesburg Community Foundation and the Great River Bend Community Foundation.

“(The computers) will have a faster operating system and be more efficient,” said Trulson. “Our computers are six or seven years old, and some of them have crashed, so those grants were very important to us.”

Trulson submitted the technology update grants last year with help from Theresa Swanson, administrative assistant.

“I’d never had experience with the actual application process, so it was kind of exciting,” said Swanson, noting it was not only their first time applying for grants, but they’re also the first to be received by the Goodwill Learning Center. “It’s not necessarily because we’re not a viable organization; people just don’t know about us.”

Jim Lynch, director of development, said many people think of Goodwill as “just a retail operation,” and don’t realize that sales from Goodwill stores are what fund the programs offered.

“It’s all complimentary,” said Lynch. “People just don’t fully fathom that we provide these services for free ... or how much of an asset it is for Galesburg.”

One Galesburg resident who has fully utilized the GLC’s services is retired teacher Robert Ponce, who is registered to take his fourth computer class.

“I had a void in my background, and I needed to improve my computer skills to become more competent and communicate through the use of a computer,” said Ponce. “I feel like a more complete person. I don’t feel like a dinosaur anymore.”

Ponce said since beginning at the center last summer, he has already learned the basics of using a computer, as well as advanced skills in using Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and Excel.

“You never know what could happen in the future,” said Ponce. “Things change so fast these days, you’re never really assured things will stay the way they are, so you have to be prepared whether you’ve made it or not.”

The learning center also offers more than 75 free E-Learning classes, which can be completed wherever a high-speed Internet connection is found. For more information or to register for any of the GLC’s programs, contact Trulson at 342-1055.

**[emccarthy@register-mail.com](mailto:emccarthy@register-mail.com)**

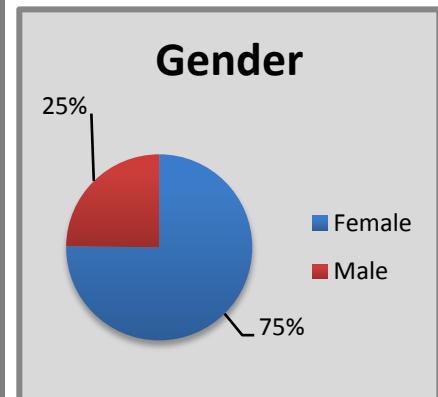
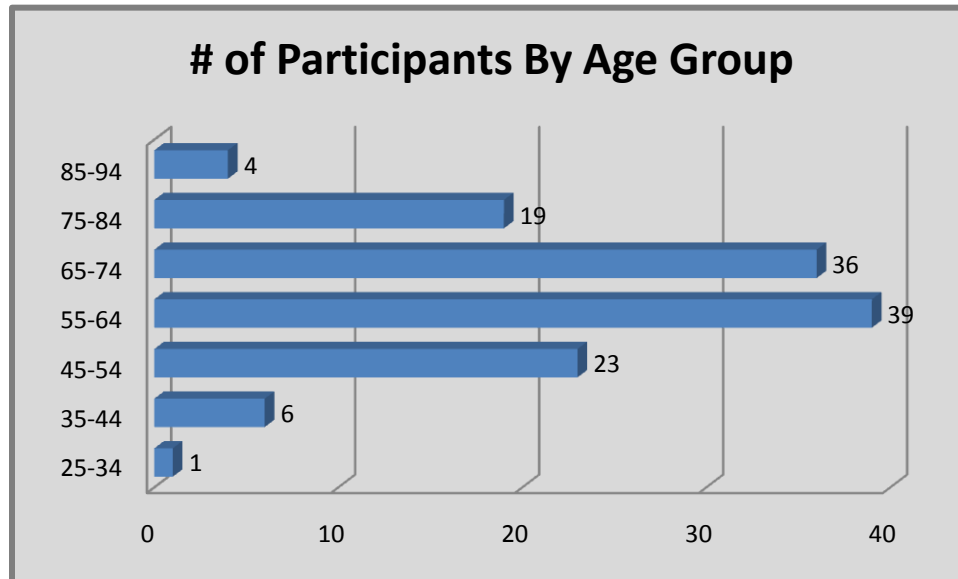
Copyright 2011 The Register-Mail. Some rights reserved

# Computer – Pekin

## Overview and Program Information

Goodwill opened a new learning center in the spring of 2011 in Pekin which is the very first learning center to be housed within a Goodwill store. Classes taught there include: computer basics, job searching, and advanced computers.

## Demographics:



## 2011 Accomplishments:

The Pekin Goodwill Learning Center began teaching computer courses in March of 2011. The courses were three week Basic Computer classes meeting four days a week for two hours each day. The demographic of the students in Pekin for the first courses consisted of primarily retired, active seniors. The students received as much from socializing as they did learning computer skills. The primary motivation for taking the class was to overcome their fear of computers.

The students learned computer basics and exposed to more including:

- Internet research (e.g. medical information, product reviews and maps/directions, coupons)
- Email communication with family and friends, as well as to government and businesses
- Software interfaces – how to use any type of software programs or websites

A common comment from the end of class satisfaction report was “I’m not afraid” or as one student stated *“Kristy teaches confidence, not computers.”*



As the classes progressed, students asked for more – more classes, more information, more advanced or specialized subjects. Pekin Goodwill Learning Center was swiftly able to address these needs and created an Advanced Class and a Job Search Class. The students also commented that the three weeks, four days a week schedule was difficult and exhausting; with little to no time to practice the skills taught between classes.

The classes were adjusted to six weeks, meeting two times a week. The classes offered the same number of classroom hours but with time to practice. The six week courses also gave Pekin Goodwill Learning Center the opportunity to offer more classes; rather than two courses each cycle, we offer four courses. The number of potential participants doubled and the demographic widened to include younger adults looking to increase career skills.

Pekin Goodwill Learning Center served 119 participants in 2011. By listening and reacting to our participants needs, Pekin Goodwill Learning Center is offering the desired classes and teaching the technology skills needed in the greater Pekin community.

#### Some Comments from our Participants:

- “I have learned much more than I ever thought I would. . . The quality of this class will help me to better understand my current position and to help in the future with job opportunities.”
- “I enjoyed the class. It gave me a chance to feel more at ease with the computer. The instructor was very helpful with everything. I enjoyed meeting the people.”
- “As a family we took this course and it was a great experience together.”
- The most valuable thing learned: “How to conquer my fears of using a computer.”
- “The quality of the instructor was superb, quite knowledgeable and very approachable”.

## Media Coverage: New Learning Center For Pekin

By Nick Perreault



May 18, 2011 Updated May 18, 2011 at 9:25 PM CST

The learning center features 17 new computers and a printer.

Free computer classes will be offered from learning to use the mouse to using programs such as Microsoft Word.

The Director of Development says the center is a perfect example of putting money received through donations to good use.

"It gives us a chance to continually fulfill our mission, of improving people's lives and create dignity through the power of work," said Jim Lynch.

"These programs are free and we really want the communities to know that we are grateful and we are here come use us."

The Pekin Center is now the third throughout Central Illinois Goodwill Facilities.

The center is located at 3245 Court Street in Pekin.

It was funded through sales of donated items at Goodwill locations throughout Central Illinois.

# Veteran's Services – HVRP & VEAP

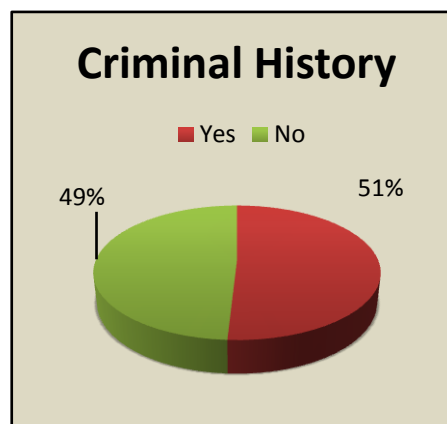
---

## Overview and Program Information

We expanded our service to homeless Veterans with the help of a 3 year grant from the Dept. of Labor. With HVRP, we provide job training, counseling, and placement services (including job readiness, literacy training, and skills training) to expedite the reintegration of homeless Veterans into the work force. The program began in the fall of 2009.

## Demographics:

Age Range	# of Veterans Served
16-24	5
25-34	30
35-44	21
45-54	58
55-64	46
65-74	12
75+	1



## 2011 Accomplishments:

- 201 veterans assessed
- 160 veterans enrolled/received services
- 110 veterans placed into employment (**69%** placement rate) with an average pay rate of \$10.23 an hour.
- 123 veterans attended the 2011 Stand Down for Homeless Veterans (See Attached News Report for Further Details)
- Received grant funding for the Veterans Employment Act Program (through the Illinois Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity) to provide job search assistance to veterans with an honorable discharge throughout Goodwill's service area

## Media Coverage: Homeless Veterans Get To Stand Down

By Paul Strater



October 15, 2011 Updated Oct 15, 2011 at 9:36 PM CST

Homeless Veterans from around Central Illinois got some needed help this morning.

They came, by the dozens. On a cold Saturday morning, to O'Brien Field. The faces of generations of American military service. It was time to stand down.

"Today we have over 30 agencies represented here, Serving veterans or the homeless community. In addition we have six different presentations going on, different topics such as maintaining sobriety, dealing with depression," said Vicki Hightower, Veterans' Services Manager for Goodwill Industries of Central Illinois.

They came by car, on foot, and by bicycle. The only requirement was to have served their country.

"Just so many of them came back to not having their jobs, different things that led them to become homeless. And so we want to give back to those who served us, and try to find a way to give back to them, and get them back on their feet," added Hightower.

Saturday marked the annual Stand Down for Homeless Veterans.

They got winter clothing, showers and haircuts. This is the third year for Stand down.

Stand down. It's a military term that means the battle is over for the day. Time to rest, time to regroup. Time to take care of your personal needs. For the veterans here, that's what today is all about.

Amos Stimage served in the army. He was asked if it was difficult for a veteran to ask for help.

"No. As a matter of fact, not at all. We all need each other. And if you don't ask for help, you can't get it," said Stimage.

Toward the end, as the Bradley baseball team played on the field, they got one more thing. From their community, respect.





# Home for Veterans

---

## Overview and Program Information:

The Goodwill Home for Veterans is a permanent, supportive home for male veterans who have been honorably discharged, homeless, and have a diagnosed disability. A majority of the residents have a history of substance abuse. The capacity of the home is 10. The greatest disadvantaging condition was homelessness. Counselors and case managers work with each individual to develop a program plan to help each resident improve his condition and reach self-sufficiency. Trained staff members are available at the home 24/7.

## 2011 Accomplishments:

- Established counseling for residents
- Obtained van transportation provided by the North Pekin AMVETS
- All residents either working, going to school, volunteering or attending HVRP
- New medication lock box for resident's room
- Established resident input for accepting possible new residents of the home
- Installed a new fence
- Installed Horse Shoe Pit for residents
- Link Cards were acquired for residents
- Increased training for staff
- Put together a nutrition manual for residents
- Updated Rights of Persons Served, Policies & Procedures Manual, and Emergency Procedures Manual



## Media Coverage: Spc Phillip J. Pannier 3rd Annual Fallen Hero's Memorial Ride

### Event Details

#### Date(s) & Time(s)::

September 17, 2011 at 10:00 AM until 1:00 AM

**Location:** Sign up & starting location is in Metamora, IL @ The Flame Restaurant. Ends @ AJ'S Lounge in Benson, IL.

**Phone:** 309-635-1022

**Email:** drpannier@gmail.com

### Event Description

July 18, 2011 Updated Jul 18, 2011 at 7:59 AM CST

This is a ride to honor our Fallen Soldier's & their families. Everyone is welcome to participate, you do not have to ride a motorcycle to do this ride. Many people ride in cars & trucks. We visit Gravesites of 12 soldiers that have been lost due to the wars in Iraq & Afganistan. We invite their family to join us. We place a wreath on their graves in memory of their lives. We invite the families to share stories of their lost loved ones with us & let the families know that we have not forgotten what they have done for us & our country. Sign up Starts @ 8 a.m. in Metamora at the Flame Restaurant. Ride starts at 10 a.m. cost of the ride is \$15.00 per Driver & \$5.00 per Passenger. We visit Cemeteries in Tazewell, Peoria, & Woodford Counties. Ride ends in Benson, IL @ AJ's Lounge at Approx. 5 pm. There a we have a Supper meal, A live Auction of Items that have been donated from various business & organizations throughout the State of Illinois & also a Street Dance. You do not have to do the ride to participate in all the evening activities & the supper. There is a \$6.00 entry fee to get into the evening activities if you did not do the ride, this includes your supper meal. All proceeds raised thru this event are donated to "The General Wayne Downing Home for Veterans" in Peoria, IL. & "The Goodwill Veterans Reintegration Program".



## Photos

---



---

**The E350 Ford van Illinois AMVETS Service Foundation donated to that Illinois AMVETS Riders.**  
**Josh Bradshaw / Times staff**

---

**By Michael Smothers**  
**Pekin Daily Times**

Posted Apr 09, 2011 @ 11:52 AM

A class of local high school students learned this semester how to put an aging vehicle back on its wheels and, in the process, how to thank military veterans for their service.

The vehicle, a Ford E350 van, is a veteran itself. For eight years it served the transportation needs of former service men and women in outpatient care programs at Veterans Administration clinics in Danville and Peoria.

It will return to duties of that nature this spring, through the efforts of a Pekin Community High School teacher and his students, the owner of a Pekin auto body shop and others — most notably a group of motorcycle-riding veterans who are building a sturdy reputation of community service.

Bob Deiss deserves praise for “showing leadership” in tutoring his automotive technology class at PCHS on the value of that service through refurbishing the van for a second tour of duty, said District 303 Superintendent Paula Davis.

That praise, by all rights, should start with members of the Illinois AMVET Riders, which formed 2 ½ years ago as an affiliate of AMVETS Post 169 in North Pekin. They’ve earned it before.

Through donations and potluck dinners, a year ago they collected and gave \$500 to their umbrella organization, the Illinois AMVETS Service Foundation in Springfield, as the purchase price for a wheelchair-equipped van. Their goal was to donate it to an area disabled veteran.



It needed some work, so the AMVETS called on Deiss and his students, who normally work on their own cars or family members' vehicles to build their skills. When they finished with the van, the AMVETS gave it to their disabled compatriot, along with a motorized scooter, wheelchair and walker.

Deiss said he'd consider repeating the project if the opportunity arose. The AMVETS made sure it did.

Using grant funds, the AMVETS Service Foundation bought the E350 van new in 2003 and donated it to the Illiana Health Care System — based in Danville — which serves health care needs of veterans in central Illinois and western Indiana.

“Once it hit a certain mileage, it had to be donated back to us” under regulations attached to the grant, said Foundation spokesman Crystal Blakeman. “The Riders asked if they could do the same thing again” as they had with the first van.

Again, the Riders provided \$300 for the E350. “They didn’t have to,” Blakeman said. “The service was going to donate it.”

In mid-March it arrived at the workshop where Deiss, who worked in the auto repair business for three decades, has tutored his PCHS class for the past four years.

“The students looked it over from top to bottom, front to back,” said Barry Freeman, an AMVETS Rider and chairman of the committee for the van project. “Tires, brakes, engine, transmission, gauges, fluids — they went over it with a fine-tooth comb. They did a great job.”

Freeman then brought the van to Eckstein Auto Body in Pekin, where owner Jerry Eckstein took over. “Whatever’s needed” from his shop would be donated, he said, including paint, if necessary, to give the vehicle a fresh coat.

A dozen miles away in Peoria, Goodwill Industries of Central Illinois owns and operates the General Wayne A. Downing Home for Veterans. The 10-bedroom facility at 403 W. Olive St. uses Goodwill retail profits and grant funds to provide “permanent supportive housing” for homeless veterans, treats post-traumatic stress disorder and drug-and-alcohol abuse, and provides educational and job placement services to help their vets rebuild their lives.

The need for those services has risen since the Gulf War in Iraq in 1991 as veterans, troubled by the strain of combat, struggle in their return to civilian life.

At the home, “They do hard work and a great job in helping vets who have been down on their luck for a time,” Freeman said.

Since its opening in 2005, the home has done that without a vehicle to meet their programs’ transportation needs. That will soon change.

“We’re extremely grateful to the AMVETS for their generosity” and their choice of the home for the refurbished van, said Goodwill development director Jim Lynch. “We look forward to using it to help our veterans.”

That generosity for the sake of their fellow veterans and others they find in need is the ongoing mission of the AMVET Riders. The benefits they leave in their wake include the lessons their community’s next generation are learning.

The AMVETS and Deiss, along with Eckstein and others who combined to return the Ford E350 to its life’s mission, “are helping our students develop the skills that they’ll use to benefit the community throughout their lives,” Davis said.



# Put Illinois to Work

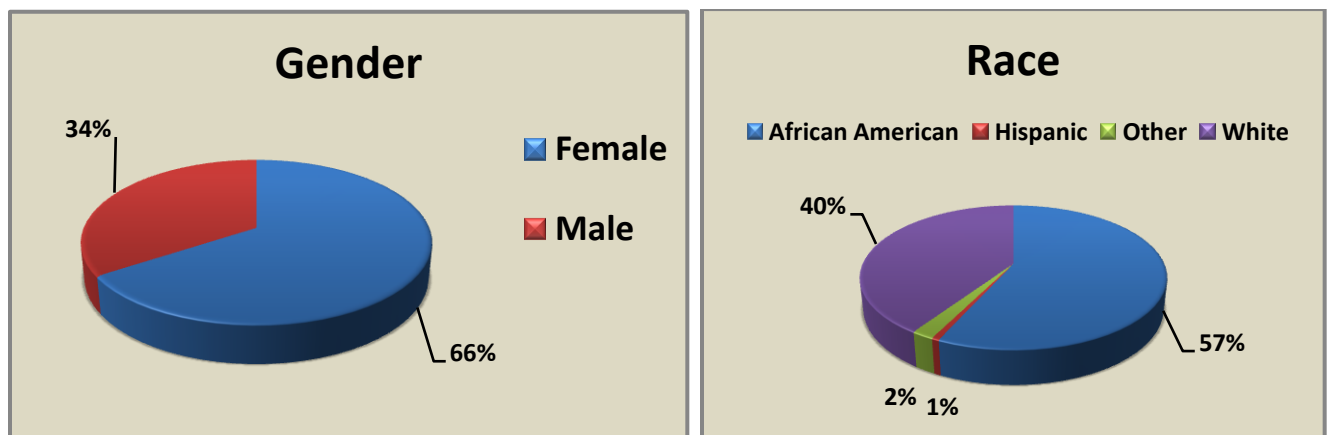
---

## Overview and Program Information

Put Illinois to Work is a program created in the spring of 2010 by Illinois Governor Pat Quinn and the Illinois Department of Human Services. This program, utilizing state funds and federal stimulus dollars, was administered in partnership with Heartland Human Care Services, Inc® (HHCS) and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to provide temporary positions for eligible unemployed low-income parents and young adults for up to six months, ending September 30, 2010. *\*The program was ultimately extended to January 15, 2011.*

Put Illinois to Work workers earned \$10.00 an hour for full-time employment opportunities.

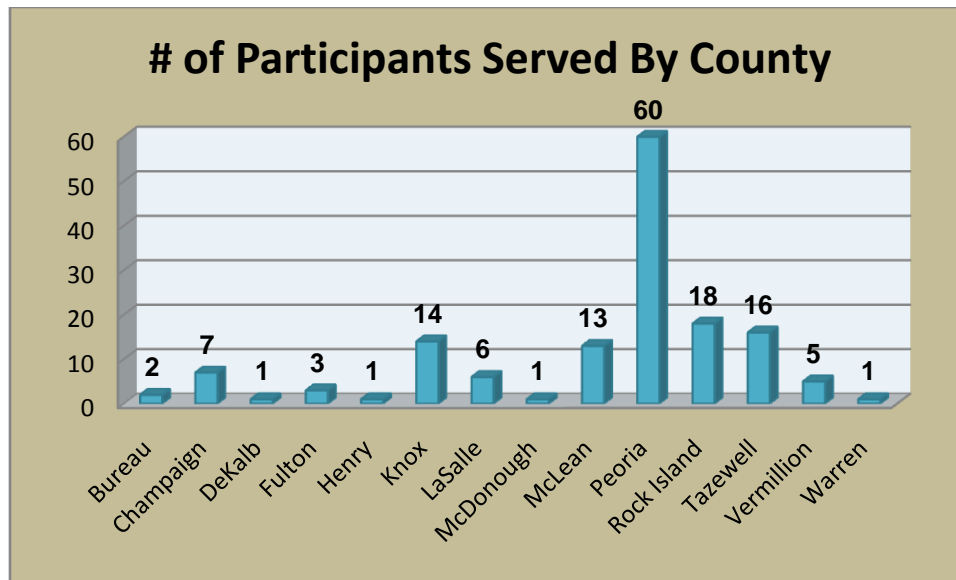
149 individuals were served through the Put Illinois to Work program from January 1<sup>st</sup> to January 15<sup>th</sup>.



## 2011 Accomplishments:

61 individuals obtained permanent employment after the program ended. The average wage for these workers post program was \$9.33 an hour. The total wages earned for 2011 was \$92,885.00

In March 2011, PITW employers were invited to Goodwill for a presentation on a spin-off job placement program, "The Power of Work". Employers were provided with results to survey questions and information we collected on their thoughts of the PITW program and what ideal characteristics they desire in their workers. Employers were also invited to continue working with Goodwill in the new Power of Work program.



# e-Learning

---

## Overview and Program Information

Online or distance learning courses were established in late spring 2009 and offered to everyone in our 21 county territory. Courses offered paralleled our classroom curriculum, plus additional courses were offered that focused on customer service, safety, and a variety of other topics. These courses were first offered to all Goodwill employees, then to the public. E-Learning is an option for individuals to take a class at his/her own pace, time, and location.

20 Goodwill employees and participants took advantage of the convenience of eLearning courses ranging from computer related instruction to personal growth and development. Students logged in more than 280 hours of online learning. Test score average was 88.5% for all completed courses.

# Power of Work/Job Readiness

---

## Overview and Program Information

*“The Power of Work”* is a program designed to provide job readiness skills leading to employment placement opportunities. Students spent six weeks in the classroom learning about various aspects of job hunting, customer service skills, answering interview questions, filling out applications, self-presentation in person and on paper, soft skills, and more. At the end of the class, the ultimate goal was to connect with area employers who were hiring.

The pilot class was held starting in August and Ending in September. Based on the survey results from the participants, some thought that the class was too long, too short, too many guest speakers, etc. All of the participant input was taken into consideration for future classes. What we did discover was that students were expecting to be placed into jobs without much effort on their part. The program was built with cooperation from employers who participated in the Put Illinois to Work program. At the end of the Power of Work, there were no available job openings with these employers. The program manager attended a job fair in the fall at Northwoods Mall in Peoria to promote the program and connect with area employers and most all of the employers conveyed their process for selecting individuals for interviews – go online. This was very frustrating because through this program we were willing to act as a middle person between the job seeker and employer. This would make the job searching and recruiting process easier for both parties. However, with the ease of filling out on-line applications and submitting job searching documentation via electronic methods, employers are eliminating the person factor up front.

In an effort to promote The Power of Work, we have condensed the six-week program into a two-day training in cooperation with our forklift class. Forklift students now get a little more time learning job readiness skills. So far the comments have been positive and the satisfaction with the program has been high.

## 2011 Accomplishments:

- Overall satisfaction with the two-day job readiness training: 4.7 out of a 5 point scale.
- Modified curriculum to provide job readiness training to all forklift classes.

## Achiever of the Year – 2011

---



Goodwill Learning Center of Galesburg is proud to nominate Robert Ponce for “Achiever of the Year.” Robert has a passion for helping others, gaining knowledge, and achieving goals.

Before enrolling in our program, Robert enjoyed a 27 year career as an educator for youth in Chicago area schools.

The school Robert taught at did not use computers as part of their regular curriculum, therefore Robert was never exposed to much computer technology in the workplace.

Upon retirement, Robert found himself somewhat scared and unable to function in today’s technologically advanced society. Robert’s dedication to bettering himself brought him to our learning center to gain the skills he felt he needed to function in society and help others.

Robert began in our computer basics class, then moved into our eight week skills class. Robert had a zeal for the classes. He came each day with a smile and a motivational personal greeting for everyone around him. After the completion of the first two classes, Robert realized he wasn’t quite at the level of computer knowledge he wanted to be at. He, therefore re-enrolled in another set of basics and eight week computer skills classes to make sure he absorbed every bit of knowledge he could. During his last eight week class, we witnessed Robert stepping up as a class leader and assisting others who struggled a bit. Robert has spoke to many community members about the profound affect he feels Goodwill services have had on his life. In his words, “I was afraid to take that leap, but these people gave me hope of being able to function in society with all the technology.” Robert showed great enthusiasm working as part of a team to share the knowledge he gained from class with others. Students looked to him for guidance and help.

Robert is so appreciative of the knowledge he has gained that he has passed on some of the knowledge he has gained to his friends and relatives. He has referred individuals to us for

services, and continues to provide assistance to others who are struggling with computers. Our center chose Robert to speak to the CARF surveyor, and while describing his experience here at the Learning Center, he was brought to tears at where he was before he had the courage to walk through our door to help himself. Because Robert had the courage to walk through our door, he was able to step up and step out of his comfort zone and gain the knowledge he needed to function in society and pass along the knowledge he gained to others.