

Goodwill

Industries of Southwest Florida, Inc.



2018 Breakthrough Awards

Presented by **FOX 4**





The **Goodwill Breakthrough Awards** honors those individuals, companies, and community partners who embody our mission of offering life-changing opportunities to achieve independence. For 53 years, Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida has provided programs and services that make it possible for individuals to reach their full potential and to live full productive lives with hope and pride.

In the following pages please join us in celebrating the accomplishments of our program participants and those individuals and businesses who through their actions and efforts have contributed to changing lives in our community.

Mission:

Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida is committed to serving people with disabilities and disadvantages by offering life-changing opportunities to achieve independence.

Vision:

To be recognized as a valued leader and resource for people with disabilities and barriers to employment in the communities we serve.

Please visit our 13th Annual



Goodwill Industries Festival of Trees

December 6 - 7 - 8, 2019

Admission \$2 (ages 12-up)

Fri. Dec. 6 11:00 am - 11:00 pm
Sat. Dec. 7 11:00 am - 11:00 pm
Sun. Dec 8 11:00 am - 6:00 pm

Fri. Dec. 6 **“ICE” SKATING - Purchase Raffles for trees, & more!**
Synthetic “Ice” Skating!
\$8 each 12/older - \$5 each ages 3-11 - Skate 11am -10:30 pm

Skate with Big Mama from B-103.9 from 4 pm to 6 pm during his LIVE remote.

View the trees, purchase raffle tickets & vote for favorite tree!

Holiday Stroll

Tree & Wreath Lighting plus Free Outdoor Concert - Starting at 7:00 pm

Sat. Dec. 7 **Santa’s Block Party** **11 am - 3 pm**
MC’ed by Big Mama from B-103.9

Santa arrives 11 am

Stage Entertainment

Holiday Vendor Showcase

Food Trucks (cash/credit)

Santa’s Workshop \$6 per child

Synthetic “Ice” Skating

11 am - 10:30 pm

\$8 each 12/older **\$5 each** ages 3-11

Ages 3-5 must be accompanied by a paying adult,
all skaters sign a waiver form (parent if minor).

Purchase tickets at: www.SBDAC.com

Sun. Dec. 8 **Tree Raffle Drawing**
Drawing winning tickets Sunday at 2:00 pm.
Synthetic “Ice” Skating - 11 am – 5:30 pm

Indoor Children’s Workshop - 11 am - 3 pm

Purchase tickets at: www.SBDAC.com



Visit with Santa!
Sat. Dec. 7th
11 am - 3 pm

Giancarlo Castano 2018 Breakthrough Achiever of the Year

Giancarlo Castano was hired June 4, 2014 to provide employment services from the new mobile Job-Link, a retrofitted motor coach that's an office on wheels. Castano serves individuals who face transportation barriers to our brick-and-mortar Job-Link centers by driving where his help is needed.

"That was the happiest day of my life," said the 5-year employee of Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida.

Months prior, Castano lost his job in a juice processing plant and so began a downward spiral for him and his family. He went through a difficult divorce, needed to pay child support for his three children and lost his home when he couldn't afford the mortgage payments.

"My life was completely devastated," Castano said. "I got to know all the non-profit organizations in our community in my time of need."

He learned to navigate through public assistance programs while living in one room of a friend's house. He began volunteering at the United Way House in Labelle. It was there he met Magdalena Flores, a Goodwill Job-Link Coordinator, who told him about the mobile Job-Link opening at Goodwill.

"Only a person like me knows how good this company is. I have so many things to thank Goodwill for," he said.

Today, Castano has a home, a new wife and baby and knows first-hand what his clients need to gain independence as he did. His son Danny, a Navy veteran, was hired by Goodwill as an assistant store manager. Another son, Gino, worked as a processor.

As an immigrant from Medellin, Colombia, Castano finished his bachelor's degree at Florida State University in Fort Myers and has started on his Master's Degree in Business at Keiser University. He is the only sibling in his family without a doctorate degree; he said he won't stop learning until he's earned his doctorate.

In 2018, Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida was presented with a Community Partner Award, due in large part, to the work Castano has done volunteering for the United Way Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, or VITA, Program.

He celebrated his employment anniversary June 4, 2019.



Christa Mitchell 2018 Breakthrough Graduate of the Year

Christa Mitchell jump-started a cosmetology career but through a series of difficulties, the entrepreneur never gave up on her road to successful business ownership. Now the proud owner of Extend and Mend International Salon in Cape Coral employs six people. Goodwill's MicroEnterprise Institute helped steer the forward trajectory of her business. She shared that experience with a new crop of program graduates.

At 14, Christa started Sheer Elegance, her hair extension and braiding business. When she got her driver's license, she made house calls in a 1993 Cadillac Deville.

In 2008, Mitchell was in a dual enrollment program at Ida Baker High School where she could study cosmetology while attending school. Then at 18, she simultaneously earned her diploma and her cosmetologist license.

"I've always been an entrepreneur," she said.

After graduation, she continued doing hair while working two jobs, and became pregnant. As a single mother to Christian, she enrolled in Goodwill's MicroEnterprise program, graduating in 2011 with a dream of owning her own salon. Of 30 participants enrolled, 11 graduated. She credits her program mentors, Jerry Hemmer and Doug Gribin, for her success.

"I really looked up to them. They showed me how business works and no one ever did that for me.

Her big break came when she was invited to a large international trade show where she could market her hair extensions. But trouble plagued her: she received an inferior shipment of hair extensions and didn't have the time or money to replace her product before the show. A projector she planned on using in her auditorium presentation broke so she couldn't show images of her product. To make matters worse, an attendee wanted to order \$12,000 of hair products a month from her, and Christa faced the problem of not being able to keep her supply up with the demand.

"I chalked it up as a fail," she said. Then the unimaginable happened in 2013. Her son died tragically; she took time off to heal.

In 2014, she enrolled in college to figure out how to succeed in business. She also worked at a financial firm and discovered that one of her MicroEnterprise mentors also worked there. He helped reignite her entrepreneurial passion.

"This time the hair was perfect, but it was me that wasn't ready. She called on salons every day, which taught her how to face rejection.

Christa is now happily married to Demond Mitchell and the mother of two daughters, Athena and Faith. She said her success is a testimony of resiliency and what can happen if you never give up on your dream.



Jimmy John's - Shawn and Kevin Hess 2018 Breakthrough Employer of the Year

Shawn and Kevin Hess own six Jimmy John's restaurant locations in Southwest Florida.

Their blended family of six children provides a built-in workforce that is accentuated by hiring employees who Shawn feels deserve a second chance in life.

"I believe when people have paid their debt they deserve a second chance. Most people would choose to work.

I will provide that opportunity. No one is perfect," Shawn Hess said.

Employees such as Shawn Climie, 29, who attended a job fair at Goodwill's Job-Link Center in Lehigh where the Hess' were looking to hire. Climie, a felon convicted on drug charges, had difficulty finding employment after his release.

"It's a title you carry with you wherever you go. They gave me an opportunity to grow and shine and not hold me back," Climie said.

He took food orders, worked the drive-through window and made sandwiches. He sat at bus stops in pouring rain and often fended off mosquitos on his way across town to get to work or to return home before 10 p.m., or risk violating his probation.

The Hess' transferred him to a location closer to his home and promoted him to First Assistant Manager. When he did violate his curfew, they held his job for him while he returned to prison for three months.

"I'm very grateful that they helped me stay. It's given me a positive attitude and stable environment. I've earned enough to buy a motorized bike and to pay my child support," he said.

Shawn Hess' father owned another fast-food franchise so she's familiar with the Jimmy John's concept. Her previous career as a criminal defense attorney in Nebraska is what gave her the heart to hire employees with a record. Husband Kevin, a former risk manager, is the Yang to his wife's Yin.

"Without work people feel isolated and don't know their value," Shawn Hess said.

The work is fast-paced, requires a lot of teamwork and is a drug-free, family environment.

"It instantly gives you a sense of belonging. Those who take advantage of the opportunity thrive," she said, adding that Climie was just promoted to Store Manager.





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Presents

The Columbia Property Group 2018 Breakthrough Business of the Year

Martin Peterson was living in his car until his name floated to the top of the Goodwill Affordable Housing waiting list. He moved into Ohio Place in Fort Myers, but he still couldn't get his feet off the ground because he couldn't afford to furnish his apartment. Between the management company and Goodwill, Peterson was able to acquire a bed and a couch for his new living space.

The Columbia Property Group, based in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, manages Goodwill's 17 affordable housing properties for Goodwill, which are reserved for people with disabilities in Southwest Florida. Its mission is to provide safe, decent and affordable housing, managed by professionals who truly care about the affordable housing industry and each other.

Chelsea May, area supervisor, oversees the 187 one and two-bedroom units from her office at Hatton B. Rogers Retirement Community, which is the only property that is exclusive to low-income senior citizens, with or without a disability.

"You actually feel like you're making a difference and you can see their lives changing for the better," said May, who's going on her eighth year managing for Goodwill. "Our two missions are so in line with each other."

The property management staff is devoted to the residents. One employee offered Peterson her spare kitchen utensils and the maintenance staff used their trailer to help him load his Goodwill purchases for delivery to his apartment. The Columbia Property Group received numerous Communities of Quality awards, which is state recognition for the quality of care they provide.

When people move in, they rarely move out. Miriam Carusa used to work for Hatton Rogers. She is one of the original tenants of the retirement community that bears his name. She tried moving somewhere else once, but moved back for good.

She's lucky she could return because the availability for all of the facilities can take years. In fact, of the 10 apartments at Coronado Place in Cape Coral, only one has opened in the past seven years. May closed the waiting list because it was too discouraging for people.

More units are necessary. "Our need is huge. If you build them, I will manage them," May said.





CATERING

Presents

The Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation 2018 Breakthrough Philanthropist of the Year

*Every success story has its cornerstone –
the key ingredient to making things possible.*

The Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation is proving to be just that in Southwest Florida, helping to create a culture of success through supporting the Goodwill MicroEnterprise Institute, Alumni Networks and Literacy programs.

Local budding entrepreneurs are making huge strides toward successful business ownership through the MicroEnterprise course, which offers training to those interested in starting a business. The 36-hour MicroEnterprise course is accessible to everyone, even those with limited income and disadvantages. This means that anyone with an idea and the desire can access the knowledge needed to start a local business. As a Goodwill MicroEnterprise Institute program partner, the Schulze Family Foundation is providing opportunity for success and helping to give those with a vision, the power to change their lives.

“The work we do in the community is certainly not about the recognition. It’s more about the positive impact we can make on the folks who live in Southwest Florida!” explains Mary Beth Geier, Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation Florida Director.

The Foundation’s support funds the MicroEnterprise courses held in Lee and Collier counties, including one in Spanish. It also helps fund the Alumni Network, Spanish Alumni Network, and literacy programs. One barrier Spanish entrepreneurs experience is effectively communicating to customers in English.

This past year, thanks to support from the Schulze Foundation, a collaboration with Literacy Volunteers of Collier County began to introduce a workplace literacy tutoring class in English.

90% of all businesses in SWFL are small business and they generate three times as much impact on the community as national corporations. Small businesses generate new jobs, help the local economy and contribute to the community’s unique identity.

The businesses started by MicroEnterprise graduates in SWFL are diverse, ranging from homemade food seasonings to Internet retailing, food trucks and beauty spas. Through their support, The Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation is improving SWFL’s unique vibe, attracting new shoppers and visitors, and bringing in additional dollars to the community. They are also helping to make it easier for those with language barriers to be successful.





CATERING

Presents

Tiffany, Angel and Melissa Brueckner 2018 Breakthrough Volunteers of the Year

Tiffany, Angel and Melissa Brueckner can be counted upon to help out where needed at Goodwill's annual Festival of Trees fundraiser. They decorate the Bear Tree, the venue lobby and outside bannisters, among other duties. The triplets, 28 and daughters of Vicki Brueckner of Cape Coral, have also wrapped cardboard trash bins in holiday paper.

"We look forward to it every year," said Tiffany, who is distinguishable from her sisters by the red-framed eyeglasses she wears.

As Tree Angels, their duty is to protect the decorated trees and gifts from the "touchy-feely" visitors.

"We've mastered that," said Angel, who wears purple-rimmed glasses. However, her sister Melissa, looking serious in her black-rimmed glasses, gets frustrated when adults who are asked not to touch the trees do so anyway.

They love working in the event's Children's Workshop, helping children play games, color and write letters to Santa.

At the 2018 festival, Melissa stood by the Mission Tree and told visitors they could pick a wrapped gift from under the tree after they gave a cash donation. She's proud of the great response from visitors who filled the donation box.

"We're so grateful to have them volunteer. Because they are triplets, it seems they're helping everywhere. It's fun to see the reaction of attendees when the three of them come together among the trees," said Susan Hegarty, festival chairperson.

Tiffany, Angel and Melissa all attended Pathways to Opportunity, an adult training program offered by Goodwill. The trio also attended Trailways Camp, offered through Goodwill and the Robert V. and Benjamin G. Miller Fund. While attending North Fort Myers High School, they participated in youth mentoring, a former Goodwill-staffed program.

They've learned to live with and manage their disabilities, which includes post-traumatic stress from a house fire when they were very young.

All three sisters love dogs and eagerly await the opening of a new animal shelter. They plan to volunteer helping the animals, and they'll be back for more at the 13th Annual Festival of Trees in 2019.



Goodwill

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