

Betsy Delgado | Aspen Fellow

Vice President of Mission and Education and
Superintendent of The Excel Center Network



"I believe being an Aspen Fellow embedded The Excel Center in the national Ascend Network that is making a multi-generational impact. We know the child of a high school dropout is 50% more likely to dropout themselves. The Excel Center demonstrates a two-generation approach to education, as parents complete their high school diploma and graduate with post-secondary credits or certifications, their children are likely to inherit the social, economic and academic success of their parents."

Introduction to Goodwill's Free High School for Adults

According to the Census Bureau, 32 million adults in the U.S. currently lack a high school diploma with those who are parents having 10 million children. With an estimated three million new high school dropouts each year, Goodwill believes it is essential to raise educational attainment levels. The poverty rate for dropouts is twice as high as graduates, and they are eight times more likely to be incarcerated. Often, students leave high school due to barriers or circumstances they cannot overcome on their own.

We recognized that adults who lack a high school diploma need support to achieve their goals and increase their earning potential. The Excel Center opened in 2010 with a single school in Indiana and has grown to include 24 schools across five states serving over 7000 students. With several additional schools on the horizon for 2019, the growth continues in an effort to support thousands more adults across the nation complete their high school education, increase their independence and impact multiple generations.



From Third-Generation Single Mom to First-Generation College Graduate | Gloria Turner

Gloria Turner was a third-generation single mother and high school dropout when she learned about The Excel Center, Goodwill's high school for adults.

"I had recently lost my job and was essentially homeless at the time," Gloria said. "I was staying at a friend's house with my 6-year old son, worried that our only vehicle was going to be repossessed."



The Excel Center's free child care center helped Gloria ultimately make the decision to enroll. The school's flexible scheduling and accelerated coursework allowed her to earn her diploma in just over seven months. She also earned an industry-recognized certification -- all at no cost.

"Earning a 4.0 GPA and Pharmacy Technician Certification encouraged me to go to college, which was far beyond what I had initially set out to accomplish," Gloria said.'

Gloria went on to earn a two-year degree from Ivy Tech in 2017, becoming the first in her family to graduate college. She hopes her success inspires her son to attend college one day.

"The Excel Center helped me realize that college is attainable for anyone with the desire to further their education," Gloria said. "I hope to be an inspiration for those who thought they couldn't do it. I'm proof that it can end with you -- starting today."

Father Works to Improve Son's Life Through Education and Employment | Jermaine Waller

Jermaine Waller was on track for an athletic scholarship in high school when a sports injury landed him on the sidelines. Believing college was no longer an option, he dropped out of school to work full-time, but quickly realized he couldn't advance in his career without a diploma.



"I was earning \$8.50 an hour," Jermaine said. "When I learned I had a child on the way, I knew I needed to make a change."

That's when Jermaine enrolled at The Excel Center, eventually earning a high school diploma. Upon graduation, he accepted a second job at a Goodwill retail store. He also received a Pharmacy Technician Certification, and through his work with Goodwill's job placement team, landed a higher-wage position at Express Scripts.

"I had help with my resume and received tips on how to prepare for an interview," Jermaine said. "I interviewed with five companies and was offered all five positions."

Jermaine continued to take classes at Lincoln Tech that were funded, in part, with a scholarship from Goodwill. In 2016, he earned an associate's degree in business management along with a Collision Repair Certification. He is now employed at Andy Mohr as an Auto Body Technician, doing work that he genuinely enjoys.

"My education made all the difference" Jermaine said. "I now receive job offers and can provide a better life for my family."

Forging a Path For Herself and Her Children | Katie Reigelsperger

Growing up, Katie Reigelsperger had little support from her parents who struggled with substance abuse. Her childhood was marked by stints in foster care. Without much money or guidance from her parents, Katie struggled to overcome the obstacles that her home life presented.

At a very young age, Katie found out she was pregnant. Her father decided to pull her out of school with the promise of homeschooling her. That promise went unfulfilled.



At age 18, Katie became pregnant with her second son. She knew that she needed to pursue her education, though child care costs were high. Then, Katie learned about The Excel Center; she could take courses to earn her high school diploma at an accelerated pace with the benefit of free on-site child care. In just eight months, Katie earned 52 credits and two industry-recognized certifications.

“I started classes at The Excel Center with zero high school credits and not a day of high school experience,” said Katie. “I was determined to change my path and to show my children how important hard work and education are.”

Later that year, Katie was offered a full-time position as an inpatient pharmacy technician at Riverview Hospital in Noblesville.

“Furthering my education becomes more and more important to me each day,” said Katie, who is now focused on earning her associate degree from Ivy Tech Community College. “Pursuing and earning a college education will further my teaching to my sons in persistence, hard work and the importance of an education.”