

NEWS RELEASE

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BNY Mellon hires “graduate” of Goodwill autism program

PITTSBURGH, December 19, 2011– When Goodwill client Donald Morrow was hired recently by BNY Mellon, it marked the first job-placement success for a program that Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania created specifically to help adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) enter the world of work.

Launched a few months ago, Goodwill’s Passages Program – **Providing Autism Support Services to Achieve Gainful Employment** – teaches participants a variety of skills in the areas of job readiness, job search, and job retention. It focuses on developing appropriate work attitudes, behaviors and employment skills for people with ASD.

“We are absolutely delighted that our Passages graduate was successful in finding meaningful employment,” said Jamia Cinelli, Goodwill’s Coordinator of Autism Services. “Mr. Morrow was an excellent student, and he has set a very positive example for others by using the skills he acquired in the program to successfully navigate the employment process including resume preparation, initial screenings, interviews, and now landing the job he wanted.”

Mr. Morrow, 29, was hired earlier this month as a processor in the company’s operations area where the job responsibilities include handling checks, invoices, documents and other correspondence. He was referred to Goodwill’s Passages Program by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

“The number of people diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum is increasing,” Ms. Cinelli said, “and although many want to work, only a small percentage of that growing number is active in the workforce.”

The Passages Program takes a holistic approach to helping individuals with ASD who are interested in competitive employment. It covers key topics that are critical to

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success in the workplace, ranging from the resume and interviewing skills needed to find employment to the social skills needed to keep a job.

The program generally lasts six to eight weeks. Currently participating are eight individuals who were referred to Goodwill by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Ms. Cinelli said Goodwill also plans to serve individuals from other sources such as the Bureau of Autism Services and private referrals.

“One of the most rewarding aspects of the Passages Program is seeing individuals develop and enhance their social awareness and skills,” she said. “Little victories and accomplishments are achieved and great strides are made as each individual works on his or her own passage from one stage of life to another.

“For example, one participant initially refused to eat in our cafeteria because he had never done so before, but by the end of his program he was comfortably sitting there in the cafeteria with his new group of friends. Another took walks to improve her confidence and posture. And another person who was quite withdrawn at first, was ultimately able to eloquently describe the program to others and explain how it was helping to increase his confidence and his ability to get a job.”

For more information about Goodwill's Passages Program, contact Jamia Cinelli, Coordinator of Autism Services, at 412-632-1905 or jamia.cinelli@goodwillswpa.org.

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ABOUT GOODWILL

Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania is a human service agency and network of thrift stores and other not-for-profit businesses whose mission is to help people with special needs overcome barriers to employment and enjoy the dignity and benefits of work and improved quality of life. It provides a broad array of employment-related education and workforce-development programs and services for people with physical and mental disabilities and other special needs. Under a franchise-like agreement with Goodwill Industries International, Goodwill SWPA serves eight counties in southwestern Pennsylvania and nine counties in north central West Virginia. With over 1,000 employees and an annual budget of more than \$47 million, the agency ranks as one of the largest Goodwill organizations in the U.S.

ABOUT BNY MELLON

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