

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 29, 2023



Contact Information

Susan Perri, Organizational Communication Director

Email: sperry@goodwillncw.org

Mobile: 920-574-5862

Download video: <https://we.tl/t-X3e8M00isY>

Download photos: <https://we.tl/t-aHejbrABts>

Additional photos available Friday, June 30 upon request.

Wisconsin Resident Receives International Award

The Goodwill NCW team member was honored for overcoming her learning challenges and empowering others to reach their career goals

WISCONSIN — Taylor Devenport was born prematurely, leading to delays in her development. While attending Logan High School in La Crosse, WI, she needed extra time to complete class work and was enrolled in special education classes to address her learning challenges. During her junior year in 2009, she was referred by her special education teacher to Goodwill North Central Wisconsin's (NCW) School-to-Work program. This opportunity equipped Devenport with the self-confidence, job and leadership skills needed to achieve her career goals and help others do the same. That is why Goodwill Industries International (GII) is proud to honor Devenport as its 2023 Achiever of the Year. Devenport was recently honored at the annual Goodwill Delegate Assembly.

"I thought I was never good enough to do anything. I was ashamed of being in special education because people looked at you differently," said Devenport. "I want to show everyone from School-to-Work if they work hard, maybe someday they will show everyone what they can do. I am not afraid to do anything anymore. Goodwill NCW helped me grow into the person I am today."

View Taylor's story: <https://youtu.be/Mj5zJeIUgtM>

While Devenport was completing the School-to-Work program at Goodwill NCW, she was hired as a part-time team member. The summer after her senior year, Devenport was hired full-time. She had become a go-to resource for the store leaders. Devenport made sure program participants were supported, trained new team members and provided inspiration to the entire team.

"We were fortunate that Taylor chose to work with us after completing the School-to-Work program," Chris Hess, president and CEO at Goodwill NCW said. "When she became a Goodwill NCW team member, she quickly focused on how she could help others overcome their barriers to employment. Taylor's story is amazing because it is a full-circle moment."

Today, as a senior job coach, Devenport works in the La Crosse Goodwill store coaching School-to-Work students and team members to reach their full potential. Devenport often applies her personal experience and unique point of view when helping others, including creating visual aids to help those struggling with written or verbal instructions, teaching others how to ask questions when they do not understand instructions and believing that everyone can succeed.

"Taylor goes out of her way to make each person that steps into our store feel special. She wants to see everyone succeed and she wants everyone to have a story just like hers," Sheri Cartwright, store team leader at La Crosse Goodwill, said.

The La Crosse Goodwill store, where Devenport story has unfolded over nearly 15 years, is one of more than 30 locations operated by Goodwill NCW in north central Wisconsin.

Goodwill NCW is a member of GII and one of 155 local, independently governed Goodwill organizations in the world that submitted nominations for the award. Taylor's powerful story stood out as a shining example of Goodwill's life-changing impact.

"Taylor embodies the true meaning of the Goodwill mission, helping to provide opportunities for others to reach their full potential through learning and the power of work," said Steven C. Preston, president and CEO of GII. "Through Goodwill, she gained valuable skills and work experience that made it possible for her to grow and lead in her career. That is our hope for everyone who walks through our doors for workforce training."

About the Award: Goodwill Industries International's Achiever of the Year is a person who has shown great progress and accomplishment in overcoming challenges to finding employment, and who still benefits from the Goodwill work environment or receives services to support employment at a community site.

Goodwill North Central Wisconsin (Goodwill NCW) is a tax-exempt organization with a mission of Elevating People by Eliminating Barriers to Employment. Support from donors and shoppers provide pathways for people who are underserved, underrepresented or disadvantaged who have a goal of building job skills that lead to sustained employment and improved financial stability. Goodwill NCW does this work within our retail stores and through community partnerships across north central Wisconsin. Learn more at goodwillncw.org

###