



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**GOODWILL'S HELMS ACADEMY NOW OFFERING FREE
ADULT GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

***Through Partnership with Camden County College Local Residents Can Get Their
High School Diploma While Earning College Credit***

Maple Shade, NJ – (June xx, 2014) – Adults 18 years of age and older who aspire to get their high school diploma are invited to take advantage of a new and free service offered by Goodwill Industries of Southern NJ & Philadelphia. In partnership with Camden County College, Goodwill's Helms Academy offers general adult education and employment services that help individuals fulfill the necessary academic requirements to get their high school diploma while simultaneously earning college credit.

Located at 222 White Horse Pike in Stratford, NJ, the Helms Academy is currently accepting applications for enrollment. Classes are offered both during the day and in the evening. Many courses are also available to participants online 24-7. Adults 18 and older who have left traditional secondary education and are unable to return due to age and/or circumstance are encouraged to apply. Students are accepted into the Academy on a rolling basis as space is limited.

From courses such as Returning to School, Assessment and Basic Skills Instruction to Computerized-Based Instruction, Occupational Training and Career Exploration & Preparation, Goodwill's Helms Academy offers a self-paced approach to learning. All college credit coursework is offered by Camden County College.

According to Goodwill President & CEO Mark B. Boyd, the Helms Academy was established by Goodwill to meet a need in the community. "Before statewide funding cutbacks, individuals who dropped out of traditional high school could go back to "night school" to earn their diploma. Now, one must take community college classes in basic skills to prepare for the

GED test which can use up much of an individual's financial aid or Pell grants," said Boyd. "The Helms Academy utilizes a multi-purpose approach. We provide the adult general education classes needed to successfully attain a high school diploma, the opportunity to earn college credits, and career exploration services, life skills training and other wrap around support services to help propel our participants forward."

Every year, over 1.2 million students drop out of high school in the United States. This is equivalent to one student dropping out every 26 seconds or 7,000 a day, according to the U.S. Department of Education's February 2014 "Partnering for Education Reform" report. It has also been proven that high school drop outs will earn \$200,000 less than a high school graduate over a lifetime. Hence the birth of Goodwill's Helms Academy.

"Having a high school diploma increases one's employment opportunities and income potential," said Boyd. "With a diploma, individuals are less likely to draw on public money for health care and welfare. Overall, we are firm believers that increased education helps individuals to lead healthier and more productive and fulfilled lives."

The Helms Academy is funded largely through Goodwill's retail operation. An entrepreneurial-minded nonprofit, Goodwill collects gently-used donated items; sells them in its 21 area retail stores; and uses the sales revenue to fund its mission-based programming—including the Helms Academy. Due to the expected popularity of this program, Goodwill is exploring grant opportunities for additional funding.

A nonprofit, community-based organization, Goodwill Industries of Southern New Jersey & Philadelphia's mission is to put people with special needs to work. The mass collection and resale of donated goods in Goodwill's 20+ area retail stores fund job training and career services that prepare individuals with disabilities and disadvantages for competitive employment while contributing to America's recycling efforts. Currently, Goodwill operates employment training centers in Maple Shade, Pennsauken, Stratford and Philadelphia. For more information on Goodwill, please visit www.goodwillnj.org or call 856/439-0200.