

Goodwill helps support all employees

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CHEYENNE, Wyo.- Many know it as a thrift store, but to some, Goodwill is much more.



Two employees say their lives have changed since getting a full-time position at the two business locations in Cheyenne. They work independently, earn equal wages like their co-workers, socialize, but for both Linda Souza and Scott Nelson, they say the job has also given them a sense of pride and dignity.

Both Souza and Nelson have a developmental disability that has made their search for employment a challenge. However, with the help of Goodwill's program called Supported Employment, the two have been able to receive the extra training and skills to help them in their every day life as well as at work.

After eight months in the program, Nelson says he got offered a full-time job at Goodwill and has now been working in the facility for over a year. Nelson said, "Being employed here at Goodwill, I pay my own finances and make my own decisions day to day." He added, "It gives me independence and structure, and I get to work socially with people."

Souza also went through the program and is working at one of the locations in Cheyenne as a full-time employee. She said the job makes her happy because she can now support herself. Souza says she was living with a low income before she was able to join the staff at Goodwill. She added,

"It makes me very, very happy and it shows that I am a common adult and I have achieved my goals."

Supported Employment Program Manager Rose Clark-Richard says when she first joined the program to help individuals going through the process, they originally had two participants. She now says the program has grown to where they now have 39 participants at both locations in Cheyenne and one in Laramie. When asked if she enjoys her job, Clark-Richard said, "Oh I love it, that is my goal is to have everyone of them that is at all possible to be working independent because it means so much." She added, "It's very empowering- they take a lot of pride in it."

Goodwill Job Coach Shayla Gadlin says the employees who have gone through the process and who now work at Goodwill always come in with a smile on their face. She said, "I think for both of us it's an exciting process. They're really proud of themselves, and it's a dignity thing."

The Supported Employment program is one of several programs that the non-profit is able to provide with the help of donations and people who shop at the two locations. For more information, you can visit <http://www.goodwillwy.org/programs--services.html>.