



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 23, 2017

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THE MCKENZIE NOELLE WILSON FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES \$1 MILLION COMMITMENT TO EDUCATE LOCAL YOUTH IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF NORTH FLORIDA

MCKENZIE'S ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTER JOINS GOODWILL'S CAREER SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Jacksonville, FL, February 10, 2017 – The McKenzie Noelle Wilson Foundation announced today that it will commit \$1 million over the next four years for after-school academic tutoring, mentoring, and development programs for students of all ages at the McKenzie's Academic Resource Centers (MARC) in Jacksonville. Through this commitment, the Goodwill Industries of North Florida Career Services Department will partner with The Foundation, focusing on operations and resource provision for the MARC programs.

With over 300 children enrolled, the MARCs are currently operated each weekday after school by a staff of Site Coordinators, Duval County Public Schools Educational Liaisons, teacher tutors, and volunteers in communities with large populations of at-risk learners. The mission of these free programs is to increase the promotion rate among students at all grade levels in Duval County.

“Our mission has always been to help young people recognize their full potential, and one of the best ways to do that is to empower youth through education,” said Blake Wilson, CEO of The McKenzie Noelle Wilson Foundation. “By building a bridge between the classroom and the community, students at McKenzie's Academic Resource Centers are being provided the opportunity to receive extra academic support in an effort to get better grades, to graduate high school and to continue to excel through college.” The McKenzie Noelle Wilson Foundation is excited to see how this partnership will further their mission of empowering students, providing resources, and positively impacting the world.

Goodwill Industries of North Florida recognizes the workforce and educational challenges facing this population and is addressing this challenge. In July 2014, Goodwill developed a Career Services Department featuring **Take Stock in Children Duval**, a student mentoring and college scholarship program, and the **A-STEP** program, aimed at providing support for adults pursuing sustainable careers. “By adding McKenzie's Academic Resource Centers to our Career Services Department, we will have the opportunity to impact students at an earlier age to better prepare them for a brighter future. Together, we will have a greater impact on the whole family,” said Leah Lynch, VP of Goodwill Industries of North Florida Career Services.

As of today, The McKenzie Noelle Wilson Foundation has invested nearly \$4 Million to help young people reach their full potential through its local and global initiatives. The Foundation was created in loving memory of McKenzie, who passed away in 2010. The Foundation is dedicated to empowering young people to discover their purpose in an increasingly complex and challenging world.

LOCAL IMPACT - McKenzie's Academic Resource Centers offer academic tutoring, mentoring, and developmental programs for over 300 at-risk youth in Jacksonville by building a bridge between the classroom and community. In addition, MARC students attend "**KAMP KENZIE**," a 6-week summer camp with enriching curriculums and engaging activities. **MCKENZIE CLUBS** unite and mobilize middle and high school students to care for others through volunteerism, charitable involvement, and our "Random Acts of Kindness" Campaign. **TEAL DAY** is celebrated every March while McKenzie Clubs and student groups raise awareness for an annual fundraising project with a local and global impact. **MCKENZIE'S RUN** 5k and 1-mile Fun Run is held every November at EverBank Field to unite the community, while raising support and awareness for The Foundation. **LIV-N-GRACE** jewelry line was created to help friends and family heal while also honoring McKenzie, who embodied faith, love, and hope. Each piece is hand-crafted and unique. 100% of all proceeds go to The Foundation.

GLOBAL IMPACT - AMAKA GA MCKENZIE is the "McKenzie's Home" orphanage in Uganda, Africa. The Foundation built a boys home, a girls home, and an abandoned baby home, and in partnership with Okoa Refuge provide medical care, food, shelter, education, and love to over 75 children. The Foundation has committed \$250,000 to Okoa's "CHILD SPONSORSHIP FUND" over 5 years, ensuring that no child is turned away. Learn more on how to sponsor a child at okoarefuge.org.

GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF NORTH FLORIDA: For over 75 years, Goodwill Industries of North Florida (Goodwill) has maintained the leading Jacksonville employment organization dedicated to providing jobs and training to underserved populations. The current vision for Goodwill is still consistent with the mission that founder Edger Helms created over 110 years ago: to provide work for those who have barriers to employment.

Goodwill executes this very simple vision by providing employment in 21 retail stores and 18 donation centers in the Greater Jacksonville area. Goodwill augmented these opportunities several years ago, by incorporating new ventures: a lawn care service, a paving company, and a commercial hospital laundry service. These new ventures offer opportunities for those who have a felony in their background, but are determined to build a new life. All of them provide an income and an essential work history to enable a move to a better job. The revenues generated through these businesses are reinvested into the mission.

Goodwill was founded on their faith in the power of a hand-up to improve lives and contribute to a better community. Through the tens of thousands of individuals who seek and maintain employment through our services, we're proving it's a philosophy that works.

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Adrian Gibbs at 904-992-0124 or email adrian@caregivegrow.org.