

# Goodwill Excel Center Midsouth Inc.

2023 Annual Report



The Excel  
Center®







**Supporting**  
our graduates on a  
brighter career path.



**Go Beyond Achieving.**  
**Excel.**



# Without an education, you learn life's hardest lessons fast.

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Far too many young adults drop out of high school because they face barriers and circumstances they can't overcome without additional support. Unfortunately, this can leave them in a cycle of poverty that is hard to break away. This cycle limits their opportunities, destroys self-confidence and makes leading a self-sufficient life near impossible.

According to the Census Bureau, 32 million adults in the U.S. currently lack a high school diploma. With an estimated three million new high school dropouts each year, The Excel Center Memphis believes it is essential to raise educational attainment levels. The poverty rate for dropouts is twice as high as graduates, and they are eight times more likely to be incarcerated. On average, a dropout will end up costing taxpayers \$292,000. Often, students leave high school due to barriers or circumstances they cannot overcome without additional support.

Goodwill Education Initiatives, Inc. (GEI) founded The Excel Center — the first adult high school in Indiana, and the first-of-its-kind in the country. Since 2010, there have been over 40 schools added across the country. Locally, we've been operating The Excel Center Memphis since 2015.

The Excel Center Memphis, Goodwill's free high school for adults in Tennessee, has been working to help turn these statistics around. The Excel Center Memphis provides an opportunity for adults who have dropped out with a chance to return to school to earn a high school diploma, begin post-secondary education endeavors and achieve solid employment opportunities—more succinctly, we offer them a way out of the poverty cycle. **All with no cost to students.**

## THE EXCEL CENTER PROVIDES:

- Hands-on internships and job training
- Free college credits
- 18+ industry-recognized certifications including Commercial Driver's License (CDL), Pharmacy Technician, Forklift Operation, Certified Billing and Coding and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) along with relevant work experience.

## Leadership Team

**Ron Schuyler,**  
Senior VP Chief of Mission and Education Officer

**Chuck Molinski,**  
VP of Community Engagement

**Candis Dawson-Taylor,**  
School Director

**Samantha Dowdy,**  
Director of Career Workforce Development

**Tony Martini,** Memphis Goodwill Inc – CEO & President

**Billy W. Tedford, Jr.** – Acting Board Chairman



## Board Members

**Austin Baker**

**Charles Barnes**

**Charles Gerber**

**Terri Landwehr**

**Andy McClelland**

**Mary C. McDonald**

**Brian Miles**

**Michael Robilio**

**Nick Scully**

**Macky Sneed**

**Brandon Tolbert**

**Dr. Patrick Washington**

**Amy Weirich**

**Brian Williams**

# Our Students

The Excel Center serves a diverse population with students of all races, genders and ages connected to one another through their need and desire to continue their education and earn their high school diploma.

## Shelby County:

- Over **100,000** adults in Shelby County do not have a high school diploma
- **\$292,000** estimated cost of 1 dropout to a community
- **95%** are African American/Hispanic students
- **86%** of students are from a single family
- **68%** of students have school age children

## Success of The Excel Center:



Two years  
post graduation,  
average wage gains

**\$20k/year**

**1,300+**  
**Graduates**  
as of May 2024

**86%**  
**of Excel**  
**Graduates**  
are employed or enrolled in college  
within 6 months of graduation

**70%**  
**of Excel**  
**Graduates**  
either earned an industry  
recognized certification,  
received a job offer,  
or were accepted into  
a post-secondary  
educational institution

### The Excel Center provides academic supportive services & life coaching, including:

- Free on-site childcare
- Transportation assistance
- Flexible scheduling, accelerated (8-week) terms
- Free college credits and industry-recognized certifications
- Hands-on internships and job training
- Job placement with private sector employer partners specifically seeking Excel Center graduates

The success of The Excel Center in Memphis lies in our school model to “meet the students where they are.”

In addition, the Excel Center provides ESL, SPED and Life Coaching services to support the student population.

**ESL** - The English as a Second Language Program has been developed to recognize students whose first language is anything other than English.

**SPED** - students with disabilities (under IDEA) will receive accurate services from the special education and general education environments generated through a consistent use of a progress monitoring (intervention school-based program) that help provide accurate data for better servicing and support for students with disabilities.

# Our Graduates

## Breaking through barriers. Excelling for life.

By raising educational attainment opportunities, our school model gives adults the chance to reengage in their education. Through a commitment to hard work and perseverance, they can achieve a life of independence, self-reliance and personal growth—both emotional and financial.

We have plans to expand with more schools in the Memphis area.

**Carla Thomas** is a mom of three with an amazing life story and testimony. Not only is she exemplary of our motto that “it is never too late to graduate,” but she also exudes the passion, grit, and grind of a woman determined to not be defined by life’s small setbacks. Carla became a mom of two in high school and had to drop out to take care of her children. Carla graduated in December 2022 with a Pharmacy Technician certification and is currently attending college to further her passion for nursing.



Carla Thomas, The Excel Center Memphis 2022 graduate



Jeremiah Dawson, The Excel Center Memphis 2023 graduate

**Jeremiah Dawson** graduated in June 2023. He says his experience at The Excel Center was, “Life Changing!” Jeremiah was accepted into the Electrician Apprenticeship Program and has landed an apprenticeship opportunity through Blue Oval City. In addition to being accepted into Blue Oval’s apprenticeship program, Mr. Dawson completed and received the Homebuilder Institute certification. He has applied for and is pending acceptance into Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT); and is planning to pursue his Electrician and HVAC degree.

**Anna Spahr**, a recent graduate said, “the smartest choice I made was coming back to The Excel Center.” Ms. Spahr had some life challenges that forced her to drop out of high school her senior year. Anna realized education was very important and she needed her diploma if she was going to pursue a career in business. Anna graduated in November 2023.



Anna Spahr, The Excel Center Memphis 2023 graduate



Scan here to see more  
graduate success stories

# Our Supporters

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## We are grateful for the support from the following organizations:

### FedEx Corporation

FedEx Corporation is committed to supporting adult education and workforce development. Recently FedEx awarded The Excel Center Memphis a \$1M grant. Brandon Tolbert, Vice President/FedEx Express, said, “At FedEx, we’re passionate about helping people acquire skills and education that allow them to access opportunities, continue their education, and build lasting careers. I have personally enjoyed serving as a member of the board for Memphis Goodwill’s Excel Center and witnessing the life-changing transformations that take place through this incredible program.”

### Cummins Corporation

The Cummins Foundation was founded in 1954 and serves as the company’s charitable giving organization. It provides grants around the world to nonprofit partners to support communities in which their employees live and work. The Goodwill Excel Center is a proud recipient of the Cummins Community Foundation Grant for \$510,000 supporting and advocating for racial equity, social justice, education and career preparedness.

### YASS

The Excel Center was a proud quarter finalist of the YASS award and received \$100,000 for transforming education for students at every level and every stage of life. According to YASS, the 2023 YASS prize quarterfinalists represent a microcosm of the 21st century, with personalized approaches that better educate students, pre-K through higher education.



The Excel Center recognized as one of The Most Innovative Education Providers of 2023

### Slingshot Memphis

Slingshot Memphis is a poverty-fighting center of influence that’s igniting a movement to revolutionize the way they need to fight poverty. Slingshot has addressed this by developing a new, standardized methodology to measure poverty-fighting effectiveness. To turn their mission into reality, they work with organizations to study their success, identify opportunities to enhance their outcomes, and invest directly to amplify high-impact programs and services.

According to Slingshot Memphis, “The Excel Center created over \$2.70 in estimated poverty-fighting benefits for each dollar it spent. The main benefit created by The Excel Center is the increase in employment rate and wages from having a high school diploma. The flexible 8- week curriculum is available to adults 18 and older in the Mid-South”. Since 2019, Slingshot has given the Excel Center over \$260,000 in support for our mission.

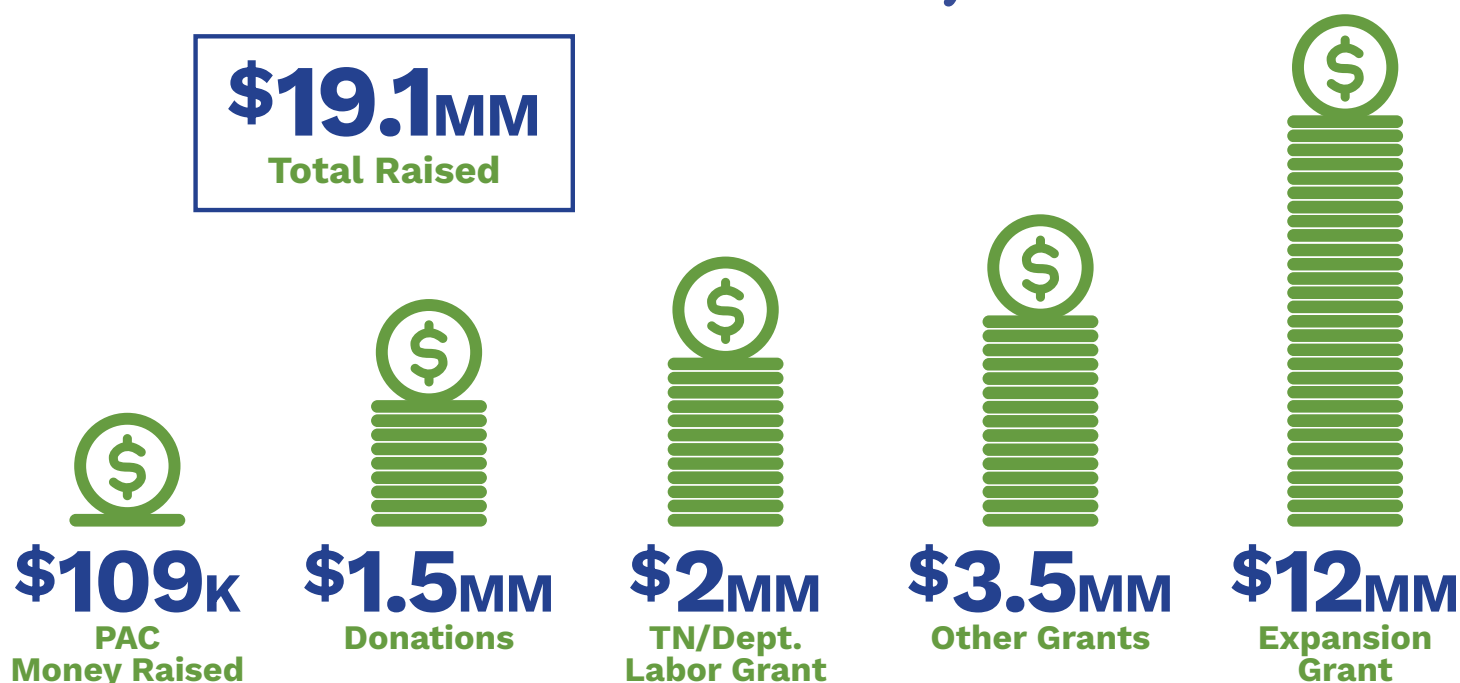
### The Slingshot 2023 Impact Study

The Excel Center Memphis was rated *At Least Strong* or *Very Strong* in:

**Benefit-Cost Ratio | Systems Level Change  
Use of Best Practices | Measurement Infrastructure**

# Our Funding

## Grants and donations by the numbers



## 2022/2023 Annual Giving

Interested in making a gift like our donors? Please go to the donor button on our website and become part of our future.

### Excel Platinum Society - \$50,000 plus

ARPA TN State American Rescue Grant  
Crews Family Foundation  
Cummins Corporation  
FedEx Corporation  
Stanley Black & Decker  
TN State Workforce Development Grant  
Yass Prize

### Excel Gold Circle - \$20,000–\$49,999

Ed Barnett\*  
Comcast  
Charles Gerber\*  
Memphis City Council Grant

### Excel Silver Circle - \$1,000–\$19,999

Rob Clark\*  
The Knapp Foundation  
Terri Landwehr  
Lichterman Lowenberg Foundation  
Michael Martini\*  
Charles Molinski\*  
Network for Good  
Michael Robilio\*  
Kevin Roper  
Nick Scully\*  
Slingshot  
Bob Stanell\*  
Billy Tedford\*

### Excel Bronze Circle - Up to \$999

Forever Fit  
JR Hyde  
Milton Rosen  
N. Gordon Thompson  
Brandon Tolbert

\*Gifts and donations to these circles are cumulative and include support to our Legacy Society, in-kind gifts, and other support contributions.

# The Excel Center Distinguished Legacy Society

**The Society recognizes planned gifts that have been made through a bequest, gift annuity, or trust.**

## **Planned Giving**

Today's gift to The Excel Center will help change the lives of many and create a brighter future for Memphis by helping more students graduate and build our workforce. Our "Legacy Giving" program offers various planned giving options to align with your interests and resources.

## **Planned Giving can encompass:**

- Gifts in living wills or trusts
- Gifts of securities
- Beneficiary designations
- Gifts of real estate
- Retirement plan assets
- Capital gifts
- Memorials and honorariums
- In-kind gifts
- Corporate Matching gifts

**If you are interested in discussing how you can make a Legacy Donation, please contact Chuck Molinski at (901) 268-1114 or [cmolinski@memphisgoodwill.org](mailto:cmolinski@memphisgoodwill.org)**



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