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Goodwill NCW's Project SEARCH Celebrates Graduating ThedaCare Interns

Intensive internship program prepares people with disabilities for work

Appleton, Wis. — On May 27, Goodwill North Central Wisconsin (NCW) will celebrate seven interns graduating from its Project SEARCH program at ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Appleton.

Project SEARCH is a nine-month program preparing people with disabilities to enter the workforce. The national program has a local presence in Appleton, thanks to a partnership with Goodwill NCW, ThedaCare, Department of Workforce Development Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Cooperative Educational Service Agency Six (CESA 6), Lakeland Care and TMG Wisconsin.

Nationally, 69% of those who participated in Project SEARCH in 2023-24 secured employment after completing the program. ([Source](#)) Overall, since the start of the program with ThedaCare, nearly 80% of interns completing the program obtained employment.

"This program shows how a partnership with a shared vision can lead to a future full of opportunities for these students," said Shana Herzfeldt, director of Mission Operations at Goodwill NCW. "It is extremely rewarding and inspiring to see their remarkable progress and achievements. The skills and experiences they gain during their internship will serve as a strong foundation for their future."

Providing hands-on experience and transferrable job skills, the internship ends with a graduation ceremony. Goodwill NCW continues to support by helping interns through individualized job searches to obtain competitive placements at the host business or in the community.

This year's program marks the sixth graduating class from ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Appleton, said Dale Gisi, senior vice president of the ThedaCare Central Region.

"Many of our Project SEARCH interns remain with us after graduation, becoming part of the ThedaCare team," Gisi said. "We recognize the exceptional contributions these young adults make within our organization as they support ThedaCare's efforts to provide high-quality care to our patients and their families. They help enrich our mission to advance the health of our communities through excellence and discovery, inspiring each person to live their unique, best life. Congratulations to all of our Project SEARCH graduates."

The ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Appleton Project SEARCH program is a hybrid site, welcoming both students referred by local school districts and adults enrolled with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. While participating in Project SEARCH, the interns rotate through various departments within the hospital to gain hands-on skills that may help them in their future employment. The hospital setting provides a variety of job experiences. For example, interns may support the facilities team, work in environmental services, the cafeteria or in other areas of the hospital.

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Goodwill North Central Wisconsin (Goodwill NCW) is a nonprofit organization with a mission of *Elevating People by Eliminating Barriers to Employment. We provide pathways to those who are disadvantaged who have a goal of building job skills that lead to sustained employment and improved financial stability. We see people for who they are and believe in the power of work, within our retail stores and workplaces throughout our community. We are proud of the life-changing impact we make in our communities and to our planet with the help of our donors and shoppers.* Learn more at goodwillncw.org

About ThedaCare

For more than 115 years, ThedaCare® has been improving the health and well-being of the communities it serves in northeast and central Wisconsin. The organization delivers care to more than 650,000 residents in 17 counties, and employs approximately 7,000 providers and team members at 180 points of care, including 10 hospitals. As an organization committed to being a leader in Population Health, team members are dedicated to empowering people to live their unique, best lives. ThedaCare is a not-for-profit health system with a level II trauma center, comprehensive cancer treatment, stroke and cardiac programs, as well as primary care. ThedaCare also partners with communities to understand needs, find solutions together, and encourage health awareness and action. ThedaCare is part of Froedtert ThedaCare, Wisconsin's most comprehensive health care system.

For more information, visit thedacare.org or follow ThedaCare on social media.