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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

**GOODWILL-EASTER SEALS MINNESOTA AWARDED \$700,000 FOR ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM TARGETING AT-RISK YOUTH**

*YouthBuild provides job training and educational opportunities for youth ages 16–24*

**St. Paul, MN – November 29, 2016** – The U.S. Department of Labor awarded Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota \$700,000 to administer YouthBuild, an innovative, community-based education program tailored to disadvantaged and low-income youth. Over the course of three years, 60 YouthBuild participants from the Twin Cities will receive valuable job training and education.

YouthBuild is an alternative education program that provides employment, education, leadership development and training opportunities to disadvantaged and low-income youth ages 16–24. The program creates positive change in the participants' communities: participants earn construction certifications while building or rehabilitating affordable housing in their own neighborhoods. They split their time between the construction site and the classroom, where they learn leadership skills and can earn a high school diploma or equivalency (GED, HiSET, etc.). This work is bolstered by individualized support systems, such as mentoring, counseling, community service and civic engagement.

"We are honored and excited to be one of just two organizations in Minnesota selected to receive YouthBuild grants in 2016," said Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota President & CEO, Michael Wirth-Davis. "The talent, intelligence and drive of youth around the Twin Cities shouldn't be wasted solely for lack of opportunity. Through YouthBuild, Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota will eliminate barriers to work and independence for young people seeking brighter futures."

Federal funding through the U.S. Department of Labor (totaling \$707,514) covers 75 percent of the program costs. That leaves 25 percent of the program costs (\$236,542) to be funded by non-governmental sources.

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**About Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota**

Serving Minnesota for nearly 100 years as a leader in employment services, Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota provides education, job training and placement services to eliminate barriers to work and independence. Revenue from 40+ retail stores, along with other contributions, supports programs throughout MN. Our "donate-shop-reuse-educate-employ" model diverts over 50M pounds from landfills annually and brings us one step closer to a world where everyone experiences the power of work. Visit [goodwilleasterseals.org](http://goodwilleasterseals.org).