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SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

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**Expanded job training and employment services available for Cowlitz County youth**  
*Goodwill to provide services; funding through Workforce Southwest Washington*

**Longview, Wash. (Dec. 22, 2020)** – Cowlitz County young adults ages 16 to 24 who are not in school and are looking for career and employment services or wanting to complete their high school equivalency and obtain a GED now have additional options and resources.

Goodwill in Longview is providing expanded workforce services under the name “Next” through a partnership with the nonprofit Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW), which oversees the public workforce system in Cowlitz County and is funding the initiative. Next will enhance Goodwill’s existing services to provide the county’s youth with additional robust options for placement into work, education or the trades.

“Next ensures young adults are prepared for academic and career success and have skills to fill local workforce needs in the region’s high-growth and in-demand sectors of healthcare, manufacturing, construction and technology,” said Kevin Perkey, Workforce Southwest Washington CEO. “Goodwill has been a partner for many years. They have a record of meeting community needs and we’re excited to have them providing these services to our next generation.”

Next is a response to community youth and business needs. A Measure of America study shows the youth disconnection rate for young adults in Cowlitz County is 16 percent. Higher than the state’s 10.8 percent and the 11.2 percent national rate. Disconnected youth are young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not in school and not working.

The COVID-19 pandemic will cause the disconnected youth rate to spike even higher than it did during the Great Recession and exacerbate existing inequalities. Young people of color with low income will be hit the hardest. The average disconnection rate in rural areas is much higher than in urban and suburban areas. Goodwill and Next’s new Cowlitz County services aim to be the connection between youth and local employers offering sustainable jobs.

“Ten thousand baby boomers retire every day and many local companies will be losing 50 to 60 percent of their workforce over the next six or seven years,” said Bill Marcum, CEO of the Kelso-Longview Chamber of Commerce. “These services at Goodwill are helping our young adults not fall through the cracks and get additional education and skills that can help them gain employment while at the same time giving local businesses a resource to fill jobs. It’s a great program that fills the social needs of individuals and the economic needs of local businesses.”

Although limited in-person appointments are available at Goodwill, staff and services are available online, through email and virtual meetings, Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

*Serving businesses, job seekers and youth in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties.*



Some of the virtual services available include:

- high school equivalency preparation and testing
- soft skills development (such as time management and communications)
- industry-recognized credentials
- case management
- job search support
- leads to open jobs with local companies
- work experiences and internships
- resume writing
- mock interviews
- job preparation workshops and classes
- funding for job training for in-demand jobs
- online training
- fiscal responsibility
- connections to housing, childcare, transportation, food assistance and other support services
- information related to filing an initial Unemployment Insurance claim (Goodwill cannot file a claim for you, determine your eligibility or assist with already-filed claims. The Employment Security Department (ESD) administers all Unemployment Insurance programs. Get information at <https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19>.)

Young adults can contact Keely Christ at [cw@nextsuccess.org](mailto:cw@nextsuccess.org) or 360-890-7769 for assistance and visit the website [www.nextsuccess.org](http://www.nextsuccess.org) to learn more.

When in-person activities resume, Next will operate out of the Goodwill Work Opportunity Center at 1030 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Longview.

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**Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW)**, a nonprofit organization, funds community prosperity by investing in services that help individuals gain skills to obtain good-paying jobs or advance in their careers and help companies attract, train and retain workers. Our investments strengthen the region's businesses and contribute to a strong economy. Since 2003, we've invested more than \$100 million in Southwest Washington. WSW is the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) designated by federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation to oversee the public workforce system in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and Clark counties. Learn more at [www.workforcesw.org](http://www.workforcesw.org).

**Goodwill Olympics & Rainer Region**, a community-based nonprofit organization, strives to fulfill its mission to help people reach their fullest potential through education, job placement, and career pathway services made possible by community donations, purchases and partnerships. As a unique, nonprofit social enterprise serving 15 counties, Goodwill leverages its thrift store revenue and community support to provide the region's unemployed with free career path training, life skills education and job placement in a variety of fields. Since 1962, Goodwill has been proudly serving the communities of Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties through our Longview Work Opportunity Center. Learn more at [www.goodwillwa.org](http://www.goodwillwa.org).

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**Next** is a partnership of community organizations working together to make job and employment services more accessible for youth in Cowlitz County. It is an initiative of and funded by Workforce Southwest Washington. Learn more at [www.nextsuccess.org](http://www.nextsuccess.org).

WSW, Goodwill and Next are equal opportunity employers/programs.  
Auxiliary aids are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Washington Relay 711.

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