

As the saying goes, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” And it’s true: first impressions matter – especially in business. Perhaps nowhere is this truth more evident than during an initial meeting in the interview room as a candidate sits down with the

hiring manager to discuss a job opening.

So much is on the line. As a prospective employee, you want to give it your absolute best. You want every word and every gesture to be just right and timed to perfection. The pressure can be overwhelming.

Yet Iesha Smith, a graduate of Goodwill’s Employment and Training Program, says she felt completely at ease when she interviewed for the position she was ultimately offered by her new employer in August 2011.

Iesha explains, “If I had to use just one word to sum up how I felt in my interview it would be *confident*. Goodwill’s goal is to help people like me become trained, trusted and ready to work. In my experience, I can honestly say they did exactly that. When I sat down to interview, I was so well prepared. I knew I could handle whatever came my way.”

Since August, Iesha has been employed in the prep kitchen with one of Detroit’s leading catering companies, Edibles Rex. For her, the new job has not only meant a chance to earn stable income but also a return to the field she enjoys most. She smiles and shares, “I love to eat. I love to cook. I love trying new foods and finding new ways to prepare them. A job like this lets me do that and interact with people. It suits me in so many ways.”

Iesha had a background in food service but was left jobless in 2009 when her previous employer went out of business due to the challenging economy. Unemployment was devastating. Iesha had built a 10-year career that seemed to vanish over night. As a mother of three children, she knew her situation was urgent. She had to find a way back to gainful employment and quickly so she could provide for her family.

Fortunately, Iesha was referred to Goodwill through Michigan’s Work First employment program and began meeting with Nicole Spencer, her Goodwill job coach. Iesha says Goodwill’s Employment and Training Program guided her through the process of identifying her marketable skills, developing a resume and improving her performance in interviews.

“All of that was extremely motivating,” says Iesha. “Goodwill gave me a path to follow and I followed it. That’s why I’m working again today. And the confidence I have now makes me hopeful for opportunities to do even more in the future.”

Liz Bakunovich is director of sales and marketing for Edibles Rex and serves as the company’s hiring manager. Liz says employees like Iesha are a perfect example of how Goodwill partners with Detroit area businesses and helps companies like Edibles Rex meet hiring needs by providing high quality workers.

results
success
inspiration



Iesha Smith completed Goodwill’s Employment and Training Program and now works in the prep kitchen with Edibles Rex, a Detroit catering company. She credits Goodwill with helping her make a successful return to the workforce.



Liz Bakunovich has an encouraging conversation with Iesha during a break in her shift at Edibles Rex. Last year, the company hired 17 employees referred through Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit.



Ilesha is proud of what she has accomplished so far and says Edibles Rex is a great employer she plans to grow with into the future.

Edibles Rex was formed 20 years ago and currently has 85 employees. As a full service caterer, the company provides school food service, corporate catering and wholesale food for other vendors.

The increasing number of charter schools in the region and contracts to provide lunchtime food service for them have been strong factors for recent growth at Edibles Rex. Just two years ago, the company served 3,500 meals per day. Today, it serves over 6,000. By necessity, staffing has increased as well.

Liz shares, "And that's where Goodwill comes in! We hired 25 new employees around the same time that Ilesha came on board... 17 of the 25 were hired from Goodwill. It was our first experience working with the organization but it gave us exactly what we needed."

Liz explains, "The candidates that came from Goodwill were pre-qualified. I gave my counterparts at Goodwill a set of job descriptions and staff needs and they supplied me with a slate of candidates that were totally ready to do the work. I can't tell you how much that improved the hiring process for us. And longer-term, it has meant improved retention as well."

The employees from Goodwill have made a strong impression on the management team at Edibles Rex. Liz says the professionalism and presentation skills of the people she interviewed and later hired were far ahead of the pack. It's something she doesn't take for granted. No other non-profit group has matched the unique role Goodwill fulfills.

"I've been impressed with how all of this has worked out. It definitely exceeded my expectations," comments Liz. "When we have needs in the future, I'm sure we'll look to Goodwill again for help in hiring more staff."

Ilesha has settled into her new job and Liz says they are glad to have her on the team. She's on time. She does her work. She's responsive, works well under tight deadlines and demonstrates potential for leadership.

Ilesha smiles humbly at hearing the accolades then says, "Everything you hear about Goodwill tells you they're doing things to help people become employed. Obviously that's something so many people need right now in Detroit. I'm encouraging my friends to come check out Goodwill. They are so professional and that helps you have more respect for yourself. It helps you see you can achieve better things."



The kitchen at Edibles Rex prepares more than 6,000 meals per day. As a worker in the prep kitchen, Ilesha loads ovens to cook food, arranges food shipments for delivery by truck and stages food for meals that will be prepared later in the week.



Learn more about clients like Ilesha Smith on Goodwill's YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/goodwilldetroitpr>

Scan the QR code to go there now!