

**Some people like to joke about how hard it is to go back to work after lunch. And it's true... it can take a few minutes to regain your focus, put your brain in gear and start being fully productive after an hour break. So, if you know what that experience is like, just imagine how it must feel going back to work after three years of unemployment.**



**Patricia Lloyd completed Goodwill's JET program and now works as a receptionist for Presbyterian Villages of Michigan. PVM provides housing and care for seniors at 25 locations across the state.**

It's a situation that, though full of promise and excitement, can be equally unsettling and overwhelming. So much is on the line. You want to succeed. You want to do your best. You want to be up to the challenge.

Sitting at her desk on a late fall morning in Southfield, Patricia Lloyd knows this tension first hand. She's lived it over the last few months. But today, the look on her face is far from stressed. She's relaxed. She's confident. She's ready to work and grateful to Goodwill Industries of Great Detroit for the chance to do just that.

Patricia is still new to her job at the corporate office of Presbyterian Villages of Michigan. She completed an internship here over the summer before accepting a part-time position in mid-September. She works as a receptionist, answering calls and handling administrative duties at the front desk. But her unofficial title just as well may be "director of first impressions" because Patricia is the first person visitors see when they arrive in the office. And this morning, smiling and thrilled to be here, she is making a great impression.

Like thousands in our community, over the past three years, Patricia faced the most difficult stretch of employment challenges in her life. Middle-aged, and a single mom to three children, she felt an almost unbearable weight of responsibility as the primary wage earner for her household. Her last job ended in 2008 and since then she had depended on various forms of public assistance to get by.

As a requirement of her state benefits, she enrolled in Goodwill's JET (Jobs, Employment and Training) program earlier in the year. Until then, Patricia says all she knew about Goodwill was its stores.

"Like most people," she says, "I knew Goodwill was a place to shop. But enrolling in this program was eye-opening for me. I had no idea how many ways Goodwill serves the community by helping people get jobs. I was so fortunate to be one of them."

JET is funded by the Detroit Workforce Development Department and provides job readiness training and job search assistance to individuals who are receiving public aid. The program helps participants gain the skills necessary to secure and maintain employment. Some of the program elements include job skills assessment, job readiness evaluation, employment training, intensive case management and assistance in obtaining a post-secondary education.

STORY CONTINUES ON REVERSE

**Patricia enjoys her job and says PVM is a great employer that creates an environment of respect. She appreciates the organization's clear focus on its mission to care for people.**







**Patricia answers calls and handles front desk duties at the corporate office for Presbyterian Villages of Michigan in Southfield.**

Patricia says Goodwill's JET program was exactly what she needed to help her refine her skills and get back to work. She shares, "I had tried a few things on my own, even considered beauty school and some vocational training options like that but didn't have any success. Goodwill helped me take a hard look at my skills and figure out what areas needed improvement. Then, they helped me develop a résumé and connected me to their network of employers."

In fact, Goodwill's network – its connections with local companies seeking trained employees – made the biggest impression on Patricia. She says other agencies promised to provide the same thing but only Goodwill delivered. "When Goodwill sent my résumé out, they actually got responses and lined up interviews," she observes.

"I am certain I have this job because of the respect my employer has for Goodwill. Because they trusted Goodwill, they trusted me to be a good fit and capable to do this work."

Nancy Walczak is the project manager for JET and believes the program makes a strong impact because it offers the kinds of practical assistance most needed by job seekers. "Whether it's mock interviews, skill building workshops, paid transitional work opportunities or adult education," she says, "the resources we provide have real world application and value. They help people like Patricia find and keep jobs."

After completing JET, Patricia says she is more confident and thinking more positively about her place in the workforce. She shares, "This is only a start. I will feel even better when I'm in a full-time position, hopefully with Presbyterian Villages of Michigan because they are a very good employer. But I'm glad for this chance and I'm considering educational goals so I can work toward a career in accounting." She adds, "For now, it is still very hard sometimes. I was unemployed for so long and that took a financial toll. Still, I'm starting to provide for my family and working hard to become stable. In time, I hope I can do it."

Goodwill Job Coach Desiree Dismuke worked with Patricia and says her attitude reminds her of a quote from football great Vince Lombardi. "The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand." Desiree adds, "I definitely see Patricia giving it her best shot. She's taking the things we instilled and running with them." For Desiree and all of the members on Goodwill's team, that's the greatest possible outcome – to know that they've inspired and equipped another person to gain the dignity and self-sufficiency that comes from employment.



**Connie Rodriguez, senior executive assistant (left), and Jill Kooiker, assistant HR manager (right), check in with Patricia to see how she's developing in her new job. They both agree that employees referred by Goodwill make great hires because they are pre-screened and ready for the workplace.**

