

## Governor Bredesen's Plan Picked Up

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*Governor's training program for big box retailers blossomed at Goodwill.*

**Nashville, Tenn. November 28, 2007** - As retail stores beef up staff for the busiest season of the year, look no further than Goodwill.

"Some of the biggest problems retailers have are employees who aren't prepared to work. We thought Goodwill could help," says Betty Johnson, Goodwill's VP for employment services.

In 2007, Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee and the Nashville State Community College partnered to offer a two-tiered retail training program called TRAC (Training for Retail Associate Certification).

The entry-level course targets inexperienced workers and introduces them to the basic concepts of customer service and job etiquette. The second training tier focuses on management skills and job tasks like making bank drops and dealing with complaints.

Governor Bredesen's interest in training adults for careers at Wal-Mart sparked the creation of the program. "The subject came up when we were attending a meeting for Nashville State's Business Leadership Team," says Johnson.

But the program doesn't apply only to teaching management retail and customer service skills to interested Wal-Mart applicants, it also offers basic skills for multiple service industries such as hospitality and call centers.

The Tennessee Alliance for Continuing Higher Education recently recognized the training as a "best practice non-credited training program" in Tennessee Community Colleges.

"We hope the recognition brought about by this Non-Credit Award will call attention to the program and serve as a springboard to replicate it throughout Tennessee," says Johnson who hopes to push the TRAC program to Goodwills in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, Johnson City, and possibly even Kentucky.

Nashville State Community College (NSCC), equally as pleased about the success of the program, has included this training as a Continuing Education Unit program on their Spring 2008 training calendar.

"Math, reading, writing, retail training. Why not prepare students for the types of careers over 340,000 Tennesseans have already pursued," says Marc Starrett, assistant director of workforce and community development at NSCC.

Goodwill and NSCC worked with Nashville business leaders who participate in professional organizations such as the Tennessee Oil Marketer's Association, the Tennessee Retail Association, and the Tennessee Grocer's Association. "We believe this program offers a great complement to our other mission-focused programs. At Goodwill, we're all about training people and getting them into the workforce," says Johnson.

Not only does the program benefit the business community, but it also helps neighborhoods across middle Tennessee.

By teaching the necessary skills to survive in the retail industry, workers overlooked by employers in the past will now rely less and less on government aid as they become employed. "Putting people to work gives more than a paycheck though, it gives dignity," says Johnson.

For the related article, visit <http://abclocal.go.com/wtvg/story?section=local&id=4437151>. The Tennessean also ran an article, "Bredesen's plan to aid big box retailers stalls" in the July 27, 2007 edition.

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