

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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LONGEST SERVING LUFKIN GOODWILL EMPLOYEE DESCRIBED AS 'SOUL' OF THE AGENCY

LaWanda Clark Honored with 2008 Edgar J. Helms Award for Graduate Staff

Rockville, MD – When LaWanda Clark was told by a rehabilitation counselor in high school that she was not capable of holding a job, she insisted that she could succeed despite a speech impediment and multiple learning disabilities. Now in her 22nd year of employment at Goodwill Industries of Central East Texas (Lufkin), Clark inspires both clients and staff with her “quiet diligence” and can-do spirit. She is being honored with the 2008 Edgar J. Helms Award for Graduate Staff from Goodwill Industries International®.

Shattering the initial assessment by her rehabilitation counselor, Clark completed Work Adjustment Training in March 1986 at the Lufkin Goodwill and went on to work in the agency's retail stores for eight years, both as a production supervisor and assistant manager. Her skills, work ethic and “gentle” people skills were noticed by Nancy Bledsoe, President and CEO of Goodwill Industries of Central East Texas, and Clark was promoted to administrative assistant where she greets visitors and answers calls for more than 30 staff on a daily basis.

“In many ways, LaWanda is one of Goodwill's best spokespersons and believes passionately in our mission, just as Goodwill's founder, Edgar J. Helms, did,” Bledsoe said. “She is motivated by a fundamental compassion and dedication to our clients, and expresses this commitment in a selfless and gently engaging way that is so motivating to others. She is the soul of our organization.”

Goodwill Industries International President and CEO Jim Gibbons praised Clark for her perseverance despite being told that her disabilities would keep her from holding a job. “LaWanda proved to herself and those around her that her abilities, rather than her disabilities, defined her,” Gibbons said. “She serves not only as an inspiration at the Lufkin Goodwill but to the entire Goodwill family.”

The Edgar J. Helms Award for Graduate Staff is named in honor of the founder of Goodwill Industries, an ordained minister and social innovator who was motivated by spiritual values to improve the lives of those in need. This award recognizes a current Goodwill staff member who was a former recipient of services and who exemplifies the mission of Goodwill Industries and Rev. Helms' values, while maintaining or increasing his or her own self-respect and self-reliance.

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