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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Goodwill, Partners Establish Help Desk at Hall of Justice to Provide Connection to Services After Court Appearances**

Goodwill of the Finger Lakes and the 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District have collaborated to establish the Community Connections Desk (CCD) at the Monroe County Hall of Justice to connect individuals and families with on-site referrals to services they might need before or after court proceedings.

“Often, individuals working within the justice system are experiencing some form of crisis or trauma. Being just outside the courtrooms allows our CCD staff to immediately connect these folks to the appropriate community agencies or services based on what they need at that moment,” said Jennifer Lake, CEO of Goodwill of the Finger Lakes.

The on-site help desk on the first floor of the Hall of Justice is being piloted for one year with a \$74,000 grant from Rochester Area Community Foundation and Goodwill retail stores. It is staffed by a full-time community navigator employed by Goodwill and, occasionally, a volunteer from other human service organizations who can ensure people are directly connected to the correct agency.

This initiative aligns with Goodwill’s experiences and successes with providing over-the-phone help through 211/LIFE LINE and the role it played during the pandemic to connect more than 500 tenants and landlords with emergency rent resources to prevent evictions. The organization also has Neighborhood Navigation Centers that operate out of its stores in Greece, Webster and most recently in Canandaigua that provide similar services as the Hall of Justice CCD.

“On any given day, we encounter a diverse range of individuals with various needs. Some might be searching for affordable housing, daycare options, or help with employment reentry. We understand that sometimes people may not be sure what exactly they need, and that’s where our expertise comes in,” said Loni Wellman, Good Neighbor program director for Goodwill, who oversees the CCD.

The genesis of the CCD started with Simeon Banister, the Community Foundation’s president and CEO, when he was sitting in a courtroom and observing the proceedings before meeting someone for lunch.

“I was watching and eavesdropping a little and hearing what some of the people were saying, and it hit me like a ton of bricks. Shouldn’t services and resources be available right here in the courthouse when people actually needed them?” Banister said.

Several months later he approached the Honorable Craig Doran, then administrative judge for the region covering the 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, with his idea.

“I’ve always thought that if you want to do justice for a person, you have to do more than handle the case. You have to try to address some of the other factors that might be contributing to why that person is in the courthouse ... or at least have a little understanding about what’s going to happen after they leave our courtrooms,” said Doran, a New York State Supreme Court Justice serving the eight counties of the 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District.

Doran and Banister went on a tour of Goodwill’s 211 call center to see what role it might play in making this idea a reality.

“I saw the 30 or so people in the cubicles who are taking these 2-1-1 calls. I thought ‘Couldn’t we just have one of those operators just come over to the Hall of Justice and be present there so that they could look somebody in the eye who needs a referral and give them the same information that they would get if they called 211 — except now with a human touch,’ ” said Doran.

At the conclusion of a court proceeding, for example, judges from any court in the Hall of Justice can recommend those involved stop by the CCD to make direct connections to services that range from housing, mental health, and employment to food access, education, and utilities.

“We help them navigate through their challenges and identify the core issues at hand,” said Wellman. “This collaboration among various organizations and volunteers is driven by a common goal of making resources more accessible to all members of our community.”

The CCD is managed by Roxanne Henry, community navigator at Goodwill, and staffed from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, except for holidays when the courthouse is closed.

**About Goodwill of the Finger Lakes:** A 501(c)(3) charitable organization, Goodwill prepares and empowers people with barriers to independence to be self-sufficient and contribute to their families and communities. Headquartered in Rochester, Goodwill’s mission programs — Goodwill Vision Enterprises (formerly ABVI, Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired) and 211/LIFE LINE — have a very long and successful history of providing services to our region. The organization’s more than 700 individuals use their passion and expertise to find innovative solutions to address pressing social needs. Each year, Goodwill of the Finger Lakes positively impacts the lives of more than 150,000 people.



**About the 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District:** In addition to four Appellate Division departments, New York State is divided into 12 judicial districts. Justices and judges in the 7<sup>th</sup> District serve Cayuga, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne and Yates counties.

**About Rochester Area Community Foundation:** In partnership with generous philanthropists and community partners, the Community Foundation works to improve the quality of life for people who live and work in the eight-county region through its leadership and strategic grantmaking. Since it was founded in 1972, the Foundation has distributed more than \$674 million dollars in grants and scholarships.