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**For more information, contact:**  
Cary Corbin (830) 609-1932  
Rebecca Helterbrand (210) 924-8581

### **Changing lives through Goodwill: one man's story**

Many people think of Goodwill as a great place to shop for bargains or a convenient place to drop off unwanted household items.

While the stores and donation centers are the most visible part of Goodwill, behind the scenes are stories of amazing individuals who have overcome adversity and formidable obstacles to achieve their potential.

Victor is one of them. As a college student, Victor was on a successful path. With an associate's degree only a semester away and a 3.8 GPA, his combination of intelligence and athleticism pointed to a bright future.

Then a horrific car crash in 1983 changed the course of his life forever. The accident resulted in a coma and paralysis. He recovered from both of those conditions but was left with a traumatic brain injury that forced him to adjust to a difficult new reality. Victor struggled in his new life, becoming manic-depressive and developing an addiction to narcotics.

When his dying grandmother asked him to mend his ways, Victor was inspired to turn his life around. He started by getting help for his addiction and committing to a drug-free life. Today, he's celebrating 19 years of sobriety.

Victor also decided to focus on his abilities and use them to earn an income. He became part of Goodwill's AbilityOne program, which helps people with disabilities find and keep employment.

Through AbilityOne, Goodwill provides training and employment for individuals of all ability levels. Goodwill currently employs 340 AbilityOne participants to help fulfill nearly 40 service contracts with area businesses and government agencies.

Since joining the program 11 years ago, Victor has taken on progressively challenging roles. He began working on a litter pick-up contract, progressing to a janitor program before moving on to grounds maintenance.

Through it all, Victor has impressed his supervisors and colleagues alike with his eagerness to take on responsibility, the effort he puts into his work and his engaging sense of humor. He inspires others – especially colleagues that have less severe disabilities – with his commitment to become the best person he can be.

His positive outlook carries over into other aspects of his life. At his church, he's known as the mysterious angel who, unasked, regularly pulls weeds, picks up trash and hauls furniture. He also invests part of his income in purchasing books for children and the elderly.

He's also an active worker on his family ranch, where he helps maintain 130 acres and nearly 30 head of longhorn cattle, with his beloved dog roaming the property with him.

One of Victor's favorite work projects is a rock garden he helped build at the Fisher House on the grounds of Brooke Army Medical Center. When a living garden honoring the wounded warriors did not hold up to the South Texas heat and drought, Victor helped create an ornate and sustainable rock garden. He added his enthusiasm and creativity to the project, which now provides tranquil beauty year-round.

In fact, he has a special reverence for the wounded warriors at BAMC's Center for the Intrepid. During work breaks and other opportunities, he offers the soldiers recognition and quiet encouragement, and expresses his admiration for them and their service to the country. He feels a kinship with others who are suffering through physical challenges and are struggling to find normalcy in their new lives.

Victor has worked hard to overcome multiple challenges in life – traumatic brain injury, addiction, mental health issues and more. As his colleagues note, he has not only overcome those challenges, but has excelled in spite of them, bringing joy and dedication to everything he does.

With support from the community through store sales and donations of both goods and funds, Goodwill plays a key role in helping thousands of people like Victor to achieve their full potential. So the next time you visit Goodwill, remember that you're not just shopping or donating goods. You're actually helping to change lives and make San Antonio a better place.

To learn more about supporting Goodwill and its mission to help change lives through the power of work, visit [www.goodwillsa.org](http://www.goodwillsa.org).

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