

Published at [San Antonio Report](#)

Where I Work: Goodwill San Antonio

By Toni Mattox, February 14, 2022

The Where I Work series explores San Antonio's evolving workplaces. It takes readers behind the scenes to learn from the people who work at companies large and small, nonprofits, family-owned enterprises, and in other nontraditional workplaces.



Figure 1 Toni Mattox, a customer care representative at Goodwill's business services operation center, is one of hundreds of employees who have a disability. Her computer is configured to alleviate the strain caused by her congenital vision impairment. Credit: Brian Woods/San Antonio Report.

Prior to my employment, when I thought of Goodwill, I thought of the retail thrift stores and bargains to be found on donated items. I didn't realize the agency is one of San Antonio's largest and most diverse nonprofit organizations with a mission not centered on "stuff," but instead on helping people find and keep employment.

I began working at Goodwill San Antonio in 2020 and currently work as a customer care representative in the business services operation center. Nearly 1,600 team members are employed at Goodwill San Antonio. Of that total, Goodwill Business Services employs more than 700 team members, 89% of whom have a documented disability.

I am part of that percentage and am especially grateful to be employed as those with disabilities historically experience the highest unemployment rates. I know what it feels like to want to work but not be given the opportunity.

In 2016, the youngest of my three children passed away at the age of 13. The trauma affected my mental health and ability to focus. As a result, I was released from my job and became homeless. That same year, I was involved in a car accident leaving my car in disrepair. All of this on top of congenital vision impairment causing me to go blind in my right eye. I felt as though I had lost everything.

After two years without work, I learned of an opportunity at Goodwill through a local job fair. I had heard many good things about Goodwill's mission to help people with barriers gain and maintain employment. I met with a Goodwill Talent Acquisition team member who encouraged me to apply. A few days later, I went in for an interview and was hired the same day.

When I started working for Goodwill, my son and I were living in temporary and unstable housing. I had little to my name following a contentious divorce and was still grieving the losses in my life. I did not know what to expect from my new employer and was not confident I could even find the strength to get through one day.

What I found was an environment accepting of all people where I feel respected and valued.

One of the challenges I initially faced going back to work was obtaining reliable transportation. Living downtown in a shelter, I had to take three buses to get to work. Goodwill provided me with discounted bus passes that not only helped me get to work, but helped me save money to get back on my feet.

Goodwill management creates a culture of inclusion and positivity. My supervisors set the example when it comes to teamwork, and I appreciate they are able to recognize our individual talents and potential. My co-worker relationships have made coming to work a pleasure.

In my position, I provide product and service recommendations to meet the needs of customers who call wanting information on store locations, hours, donation criteria and information about Goodwill career centers and training programs. I enjoy interacting with customers and helping address their questions and concerns.

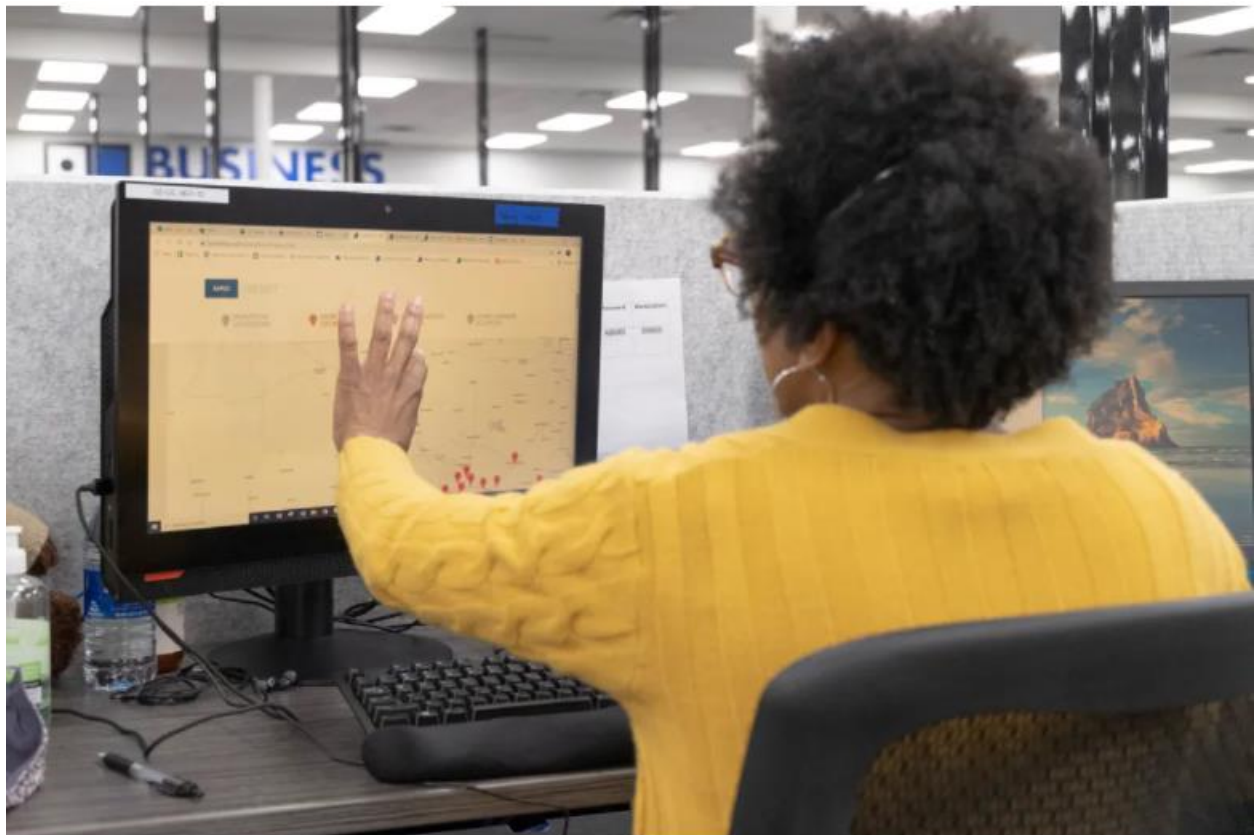


Figure 2Mattox uses a touch screen computer to accommodate a congenital vision impairment that affects her right eye. Credit: Bria Woods / San Antonio Report

On a typical day, I log on to my softphone and position myself to receive calls routed to Goodwill San Antonio's customer care team. I manage caller inquiries, and also keep track of tickets awaiting an agent's response and send out reminders to my team. I am fortunate to work with a great group of people whom I also consider friends. No matter the situation, we are always ready to assist one another.

Goodwill San Antonio's business services operation provides outsourced business solutions to federal and municipal governments as well as commercial businesses. Our team manages 34 contracts for services ranging from call/contact center services to document management, commercial landscaping and tree care services and electronics recycling. Goodwill San Antonio serves on every military base here in San Antonio as well as at Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio. The revenue earned from working on these contracts helps fund employment and training opportunities.

Goodwill San Antonio's mission is to empower people through employment and job training. I admire that Goodwill's purpose specifically offers resources for people who face challenges with obtaining and keeping employment. It makes me happy to have employment because it restores a sense of dignity and self-respect to be able to provide for myself and help my two children.

Goodwill offers numerous supportive services designed to help those with disabilities or other barriers not just have a job but keep a job. Every team member, no matter position or title, has access to coaches who provide needed support with workplace and/or personal issues. Coaches help team members overcome challenges by providing referrals for needed resources, helping construct plans to achieve goals, and most importantly, being there to listen and offer advice.



Figure 3 Toni Mattox takes calls routed to Goodwill San Antonio's customer care team as a customer care representative in the business services operation center. Credit: Bria Woods / San Antonio Report

I'm also provided accommodations to lessen the strain of my vision impairment. I have a touch screen monitor which allows me to magnify the screen and an adjustable desk to help with fatigue. I recently had an eye emergency causing me to miss a few days of work. I was able to receive the medical care I needed without being concerned my job would be in jeopardy. The accommodations in conjunction with the benefits I receive have made it easier for me to continue to work despite my disabilities.

Being employed has positioned me to help my 25-year-old son, Russell, and my 21-year-old daughter, Marris. My son and I now share an apartment while he is working toward a computer technology certification. I am also able to help my daughter while she attends college at Texas Tech University. Stable employment has given me the means to purchase another car as well as help my daughter get a vehicle of her own.

The importance of family was instilled in me at an early age by my father, a veteran who served 30 years in the United States Air Force. He was always the first to help anyone in need and taught me, by example, to be deeply appreciative, show kindness whenever possible and to always persevere.

And that is what I try to do on a daily basis. I might be blind in one eye, but I can see sincerity. Every day, I see that Goodwill is sincerely there for me. They have given me the opportunity to have a job, purpose and the confidence to provide for my children. And in being there for me and my family, Goodwill has become part of that family.