



Team Player: Brady Raulerson

“It’s a joy to see him make good for himself.”

Goodwill 
Southwest Florida

L.I.F.E. Academy Success Story

For many young people, graduation marks the end of one journey and the beginning of another. For young people with special needs, both journeys can be challenging, but with the right help, they can also be richly rewarding.

At birth, Brady Raulerson was diagnosed with Down syndrome. His family searched for the right education for him—one which would provide him with the best possible future.

“While he was growing up, I was always worried about what would happen when the day came and he’d have to go out into the world and find a job,” says his mother, Leigh. “How would people perceive him? How would he be treated?”

Those worries ended when Brady enrolled in the Goodwill L.I.F.E. Academy, a Lee County charter school for students with developmental disabilities. The school focuses not only on academics and social skills, but also on vocational skills.

His vocational trainer at the L.I.F.E. Academy, Ketinna Gadsden, knew that Brady had the skills to enter the workforce.

“Brady is a real team player. In class, he was willing to learn anything and try anything,” says Ketinna. “He’s also very competitive. He always wants to be the best.”

As a graduate of the L.I.F.E. Academy’s vocational training program, Brady was guaranteed employment after graduation. In 2008, he joined Goodwill’s e-commerce team as a clerk, where he works alongside another L.I.F.E. Academy graduate, Danny Lorenzo.

“He doesn’t need a lot of supervision. Brady probably scans an average of 250 books a day,” says e-commerce manager Karen Myers. “He’s a joy to have around, and it’s a joy to see him make good for himself.”

Brady’s mother is grateful that her son has found work with people who understand his needs. “I know when we send him off to work every day, he’s with people that genuinely care about him.”

Leigh continues, “Having a job gives him the feeling that he’s doing something important. Plus, he really loves that he has spending money to take his dad or I out to the movies and treat us.”

Lynn Pottorf, the Goodwill L.I.F.E. Academy principal, is also proud of Brady’s journey into post-school adult life.

“Last year, when our students went to shopgoodwill for their [internship] program, Brady jumped in and helped lead their orientation,” she explains. “It made the experience real for them, because they had a peer explaining it to them. The student had become the authority. That’s pretty awesome.”



Brady Raulerson,
2008
L.I.F.E. Academy
Graduate

About the L.I.F.E. Academy

The Goodwill L.I.F.E. Academy first opened its doors in 2005 with just six students. Today, the school boasts 40 middle and high school students.

The L.I.F.E. Academy is a tuition-free, open-enrollment Lee County charter school. Students with intellectual disabilities who are entering grades six through twelve (ages 11-22) are welcomed, as well as post-graduate students who have not yet reached the maximum age of 22.

For more information about the Goodwill L.I.F.E. Academy, contact principal, Lynn Pottorf at (239) 334-4434.

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