

See how James grew his career at Goodwill



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Through obstacles and hardships, James was awarded Store Manager of the Year.

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MEET JAMES AUTRY

James Autry has been working at Goodwill for 13 years, and his journey with Goodwill is quite the ride.

In 2002, James was diagnosed with a heart condition, which required him to be on oxygen. Doctors told him he wouldn't live to see 41 years old. During this time, James was on disability while his wife (his girlfriend at the time) worked as a teacher.

FINDING GOODWILL

In 2009, James found Goodwill through a program called Vocational Rehabilitation, which partnered with Goodwill to work with people with disabilities. He began working at the Freedom Drive Outlet, now known as [Second Editions](#), through the program, which lasted three months. After that three-month period was over, Jeff Bise, who was his manager at the time, requested James to work for a second period.

"From there, my life just started to take off," James said.

WORKING HIS WAY UP

After the second period, James joined the outlet store as a part-time team member; and after six months, he was promoted to a full-time position as a donation material handler. His health improved, and because he could work a

full-time job again, he was able to come off disability.

James worked his way up at the outlet store and held various positions, including retail lead, retail shift manager and assistant store manager. He eventually was promoted to store manager in training in 2016.

CONQUERING CANCER

Unfortunately, that same year, James was diagnosed with cancer and had to be out of work for six months. Until then, he made a point to always show up for work.

"I had perfect attendance for the first five years of my employment. I never missed a day," James explained.

Thankfully, James defeated cancer and was able to return to work as an assistant manager at the [South Boulevard store](#) later that year. He was then promoted to store manager in 2018.

He credits his wife and God as his strongholds during his life's challenges, along with a few important people at Goodwill.

"I've always called Jeff [Bise] my guardian angel. He opened doors for me that haven't closed yet," James emphasized.

Others here, including Al Perez, Heather Wright, Colleen Rizzo and Micah Javier have had a significant impact on James' journey at Goodwill.

STORE MANAGER OF THE YEAR

James' story has had many twists and turns, but he has been able to overcome the obstacles that he has faced over the years. At 60 years old, he is thriving, in good health and is the breadwinner for his family.

"The car my wife drives, I paid for it; the house we live in, I bought; and it's all because of Goodwill," James exclaimed.

Since being promoted to store manager, James has found success along the way. He won the Store Manager of the Year Award in 2020 and is now store manager for Goodwill's new [Wendover Road store](#).

"I love working for Goodwill because of what they did for me," James said. "I'm grateful to be in the position I'm in and to be able to do what I can for the community."

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