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Goodwill to present info on youth mentor program

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— Goodwill Industries of the Conemaugh Valley Inc. will hold GoodGuides Community Information Days at four area Goodwill stores Friday and Saturday.

The Goodwill GoodGuides Youth Mentoring Program is a national mentoring initiative designed to help those ages 12 to 17 who have encountered barriers to success.

The program, operated in Cambria and Somerset counties by Goodwill Industries of the Conemaugh Valley, focuses on helping young people to build career plans and skills as they prepare for school completion, postsecondary training and employment opportunities. It provides these youngsters with structured and supportive relationships with adult mentors.

The goal of the information days is to attract a large pool of volunteer mentors, said Debbie Roman, Goodwill Industries spokeswoman.

The Conemaugh Valley Goodwill began operating GoodGuides in January 2010 and has made more than 60 successful matches, but many more youth are waiting for mentors, said Phyllis J. Bandstra, president and CEO.

“Guiding a young person toward a promising career, showing a young person that you care and convincing a young man or woman that he or she can be excited about the future because he or she now has a goal and a purpose is what GoodGuides is all about,” Bandstra said.

“We want the youngsters to become self-sufficient, contributing members of society,” Bandstra said.

Goodwill offers its mentors orientation and training that teaches the importance of the structured mentoring program and how the volunteers can make a difference in youths’ lives.

Mentors are asked to volunteer four hours a month or one hour a week for at least one year, said Bandstra.

She said Goodwill is seeking community members and businesses to organize career talks, workshops and company tours and to provide education guidance.

More information is available from Cindy O’Connor, GoodGuides program manager, at 536-3536 or e-mail: goodguides@goodwilljohns-town.org.

