



April 12, 2019

FDIC's Atlanta Regional Office  
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To Whom it May Concern:

It was well over a century ago that Dr. Edgar J. Helms, having observed the ineffectiveness of charitable handouts for long-term poverty relief, was divinely inspired to teach people employable skills by hiring them to repair donated goods. With the faith and foresight to turn ideas into action, he ignited the Goodwill movement that has given countless people the hand up they needed to change their lives.

In Macon-Bibb County, Goodwill of Middle Georgia has been the arbiter of Dr. Helms' legacy for nearly 50 years. Just like SunTrust, Goodwill also believes in creating a strong community. While delivering our mission to help people discover and develop their God-given gifts through education, training, and career services, Goodwill has helped thousands of people to a onto career pathways out of poverty.

SunTrust's support for the general economic health of the Macon-Bibb County has been inspiring and we applaud all the good work they have done for our community; actively supporting the developmental goals and civic initiatives of the community, by helping people and businesses and targeting economic development. This focus is important because Macon's concentrated poverty rate is third in the nation.

As Macon community leaders look to the future, chief among the critical priorities are reducing poverty and developing a competitive middle-skills labor force. The complex economic and social problems linked to poverty only deepen as the community's population grows and the need for services (and more workers) increases in tandem. But if potential employees have no training, no work experience, and limited motivation, economic growth is hamstrung.

In the years to come, Macon's greatest competitive advantage will be a diverse workforce trained for careers at *all* skill levels – from professional and technical to middle skills. However, an alarming number of Macon residents live in or near a state of pervasive poverty, lacking sufficient income to live and raise their families comfortably. Nearly 36% of Macon-Bibb households live on less than \$25K a year, with government assistance accounting for 24% of all household income. Further, over 50% of Macon-Bibb residents have no education beyond high school. All of these circumstances contribute to Bibb County's crime and homicide rate, the second highest per capita in the state.

Meanwhile, students with financial, personal, intellectual or other socio-economic challenges often become part of the high percentage of non-completers at technical and traditional state college system institutions. Without intensive, specialized support resources they need to overcome their barriers,

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***[www.goodwillworks.org](http://www.goodwillworks.org)***



these students are less likely to succeed at traditional and technical post-secondary institutions like Middle Georgia State University, Mercer or Central Georgia Tech.

This middle-skills niche is the type of student Goodwill's Helms College model was designed to serve. The only private, accredited, federal financial aid-eligible post-secondary institution in the U.S. affiliated with a local Goodwill organization, Helms College is a key education resource for Macon residents.

As a 2018 Lighting the Way Award recipient, Goodwill is proud of our partnership with SunTrust. With SunTrust's support, Goodwill was able to offer a "hand up" to serve 15,633 people in Middle Georgia and South Carolina and found employment for 6,870 residents in 2018. These services and employment are game changers for families and our community.

To continue to support and help the Macon -Bibb County area - we realize that we need to provide more resources. With the increased prevalence of business and technology in our daily lives, companies are relying more than ever on employees who have experience with both business and technology skills. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that computer and information technology jobs will grow by 12% from 2014 to 2024 (faster than the national average for other occupations).

Our 2023 Strategic Plan will include the establishment of a **School of Business and Technology** at Helms College.

SunTrust has been a longtime supporter of Goodwill Industries of Middle Georgia and the recent generous gift to help build up Helms College is changing the community – one career at a time.

In goodwill,



James K. Stiff  
*President*  
Goodwill Industries of Middle Georgia, Inc.  
Helms College