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## **Pandemic has Companies Nationwide Taking Proactive Approach to Employee Wellbeing**

*Data Giant Acxiom and Others Enroll in Mental Health First Aid*

**LITTLE ROCK, AR** (Dec. 14, 2020) — On any given day, one in five people will battle a major mental illness. With the onset of the pandemic, that number is growing. According to the Centers for Disease Control, adults report “considerably elevated adverse mental health conditions associated with COVID-19.”

- 31% report symptoms of anxiety and depression
- 26% report trauma/stressor-related disorders
- 13% started/increased substance use
- 11% have considered suicide

Since July, more than 180 people have taken a certification course in Mental Health First Aid offered by Goodwill Industries of Arkansas. Many of them are employees at a California college, a major food producer in North Carolina, and a global data company based in Arkansas, Acxiom. Other participants include Acxiom’s sister Interpublic Group companies, Kinesso and Matterkind. They are taking a proactive approach to ensure the wellbeing of their employees and associates.

“This year has been tough for everyone due to the pandemic, and we want to provide every available resource to our associates to help with their mental wellbeing,” said Mary Ward, chief people officer at Acxiom. “We consider our associates to be part of our Acxiom family, and just like any family would do, we want to help them be the best version of themselves in order to have a healthy work-life balance.”

Participants are taught how to recognize signs of depression, anxiety, substance use and other issues many people face. They learn how to effectively intervene and help the person get the assistance they need.

“Mental Health First Aid is reaching individuals all across the country at a time when it’s needed most,” Goodwill Program Development Manager Brandi Alcacio said. “We are excited to continue to expand and train individuals on how to identify and respond to mental health challenges because we are seeing not only an increased awareness of

mental health issues, but an increased interest in learning how to help others through a mental health challenge.”

Course materials are provided to participants online, and the certification course is held via Zoom, with participants breaking off into smaller web-based groups to talk about the issues they’re seeing and learn how they can help.

The Mental Health First Aid course provides certification through the National Council for Behavioral Health. Courses are offered the second and fourth Wednesday of each month.

**About Goodwill Industries of Arkansas** Goodwill Industries of Arkansas is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to changing lives through education, training and employment. Revenue generated through the sale of reusable donated goods at Goodwill retail stores is used to create jobs and fund critical training programs for Arkansans. To learn more, visit [GoodwillAR.org](http://GoodwillAR.org). Follow us on Twitter: @GoodwillAR and find us on Facebook: GoodwillAR or Instagram: GoodwillAR.