

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 28th, 2013

Contact:
Scott Moore, Communications & Marketing Specialist
(419) 278-0092

**The RIDGE Project co-hosts Toledo Mayor's Roundtable
Event at Goodwill Industries urged businesses to hire ex-offenders**



Left to right- Ron Huber of Goodwill, Mayor Michael Bell, Catherine Tijerina and Ron Tijerina of The RIDGE Project.

The RIDGE Project co-hosted a roundtable discussion on October 28th involving Toledo mayor Michael Bell and some of the city's most prominent employers and social service agency leaders. The event was held at the Goodwill of Northwest Ohio's headquarters in downtown Toledo. Goodwill was the other co-host of the occasion.

The luncheon was held to highlight the difficulties that returning ex-offenders have in finding employment and to educate prospective employers on the benefits of putting them to work. Special focus was also given to the impact of offender recidivism on the state and local economy.

The meeting began with an introduction from mayor Bell who was quick to point out the significance of this type of dialogue. "Discussions like this are extremely important to the future of our city." Bell said. Later he noted the likelihood that returning offenders have to resume criminal activity "because these men want to do right but can't find a job. "

Robert Huber, President and Chief Executive Officer of Goodwill Industries of Northwest Ohio agreed with the mayor's assessment. "We're very pleased to host this"

Huber stated. "Our mission has always been working with people with barriers to employment." RIDGE Project Co-Executive Director Ron Tijerina spoke about such barriers as well. Tijerina believes The RIDGE Project functions as "a voice for a demographic that doesn't have one."

Lunch for the event was provided by students from The RIDGE Project's Culinary Arts Academy. This initiative is one of the programs by which the McClure based non-profit readies their clients (many of them ex-offenders) to re-enter the workforce. A workforce that RIDGE Project Co-Executive Director Catherine Tijerina says is ready for them. "There has been a gradual shift in consciousness and culture around this issue", she explained, "society is now beginning to welcome these people back."

Until this shift is complete, Ron Tijerina said their agency will continue "to fight the belief that any person or any family is disposable."

The RIDGE Project is a Christian, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, founded in 2000 that provides services through partnerships with churches, schools, and state and national agencies to serve the youth and families of Ohio. Additionally, the organization strives to inform individuals, communities, the media and local and national policy makers of the importance of strong families. The organization has been recognized as a federal Department of Health and Human Services "Best Practice" program, and has been identified nationally as a leader in family and youth services. For more information about The RIDGE Project or their programs please visit www.theridgeproject.com.

Goodwill Industries of Northwest Ohio assists people with barriers to employment to achieve independence. It is a part of a network of 207 community-based, autonomous member organizations worldwide that serve people with workplace disadvantages and disabilities by providing job training and employment services. To learn more about Goodwill Industries visit www.goodwillnwohio.com.

#