



**For Immediate Release**

**Release Date: May 10, 2022**

**Contact:** Chelle Fried  
Director of Digital Marketing and Community Relations  
406-750-0966 or e-mail: [chellef@esgw.org](mailto:chellef@esgw.org)

**Easterseals-Goodwill reaches 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary milestone**

Great Falls, MT - Easterseals-Goodwill Northern Rocky Mountain Inc. turns 75 in 2022. The organization was founded in 1947 to address a growing need for services to assist children afflicted by cerebral palsy, polio and other crippling diseases in the state of Montana.

"We are very excited and grateful to have reached this incredible milestone and we look forward to celebrating with our staff, communities and the people we serve throughout the year," stated Michelle Belknap, President/CEO of Easterseals-Goodwill Northern Rocky Mountain Inc.

The story of Easterseals-Goodwill's founding and early growth includes some interesting players, according to Belknap. District governors of the Montana Rotary Clubs and Kiwanis Clubs played a leadership role in the meetings with national Easterseals organization (then called the National Society for Crippled Children) which resulted in establishment of the Montana chapter that is Easterseals-Goodwill today. A few years later as the organization sought to expand services to Great Falls, the Junior League of Great Falls was instrumental in helping provide funding to get programs started there.

The organization's first headquarters was located in Helena and its first program was a cerebral palsy center offering therapy and special education services located in Billings on what is today the campus of MSU-Billings. Soon after, a variety of programs began in Butte, Missoula and other towns around the state.

Easterseals-Goodwill's history in Great Falls began with cerebral palsy diagnostic clinics in 1950 and the list of local services grew throughout the 1950s with support from the Junior League and local residents and businesses. The organization's first Montana facility was built in Great Falls in 1957 on the east end of Central Avenue. Named the Great Falls Rehabilitation Center, this facility served as Easterseals-Goodwill's headquarters throughout much of its history. Remodeled in 2013-2014, it is used today as the location for its Adult Day and programs serving adults with intellectual disabilities.

Since incorporating in 1947, Easterseals-Goodwill has expanded its service area to over 400,000 square miles, adding the states Idaho, Wyoming, eastern Oregon, and Utah. It began an affiliation with Goodwill Industries International in 1979 and expanded retail services from Montana to southern Idaho and then Utah over the next four decades.

“We’ve come a long way since 1947,” said Belknap. “What started as a small entity organized by groups of volunteers in Montana has metamorphosed into what Easterseals-Goodwill is today: a large, stable nonprofit with over 1,000 employees serving thousands of people across Montana, Idaho, eastern Oregon, Wyoming, and Utah. As we look back on yesterday, we are also looking forward to how we can meet the challenges of tomorrow. As our communities change and grow, Easterseals-Goodwill will be here to fulfill the needs.”

If you’re interested in exploring more about Easterseals-Goodwill history in Montana and the region, the organization has created a special 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary website at [www.esgw75years.org](http://www.esgw75years.org) with photos and highlights of events throughout the decades.

Easterseals-Goodwill will be celebrating with a Chamber of Commerce Business after Hours at the main headquarters in Downtown Great Falls on May 19<sup>th</sup> from 4:00pm – 6:00pm.

Easterseals-Goodwill Northern Rocky Mountain Inc. is a non-profit organization with employment and job training, community integration and housing for adults with intellectual disabilities, children’s therapy, and health-related programs for adults and seniors. Easterseals-Goodwill provides 37 different programs in 46 locations in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, eastern Oregon and Utah.