

Step Up Savannah

Savannah's Poverty Reduction Initiative



Step Up Savannah Mission:

The Step Up collaborative will enhance economic independence in Savannah by encouraging residents to take personal responsibility and organizations to identify and work to reduce barriers to self sufficiency; by finding, redistributing or creating the necessary resources; and by evaluating outcomes.



Action Plan

A community makes a plan

How do you address the magnitude of issues in poverty?

- The City of Savannah initiated a task force in 2004 that researched and analyzed poverty and the “support system”
- Key barriers to self-sufficiency identified
- Poverty identified as an economic development issue
- Poverty Simulations



Task Force Research:

Key economic problems

- The rate of poverty is not declining
- Poverty is disproportionate by race
- Female heads of households are moving out of poverty slower
- The middle class is small and disparities between rich and poor are growing
- Poverty is high, wages are low
- Educational attainment is low

Poverty Simulations



Billy Carver, Commercial Fleet Director of J.C. Lewis Ford tries to “survive” the week in a poverty simulation.

- Identified poverty simulations as an engagement tool
- Brought business actively and long-term to the table
- Over 2500 participants go through poverty simulations from 2005-2008
- 12 new course directors trained in June to lead poverty simulations

Who are we?

- 104 organizations working on action teams
- 6 staff members (City, County and Chamber of Commerce payrolls)
- United Way acts as fiscal agent



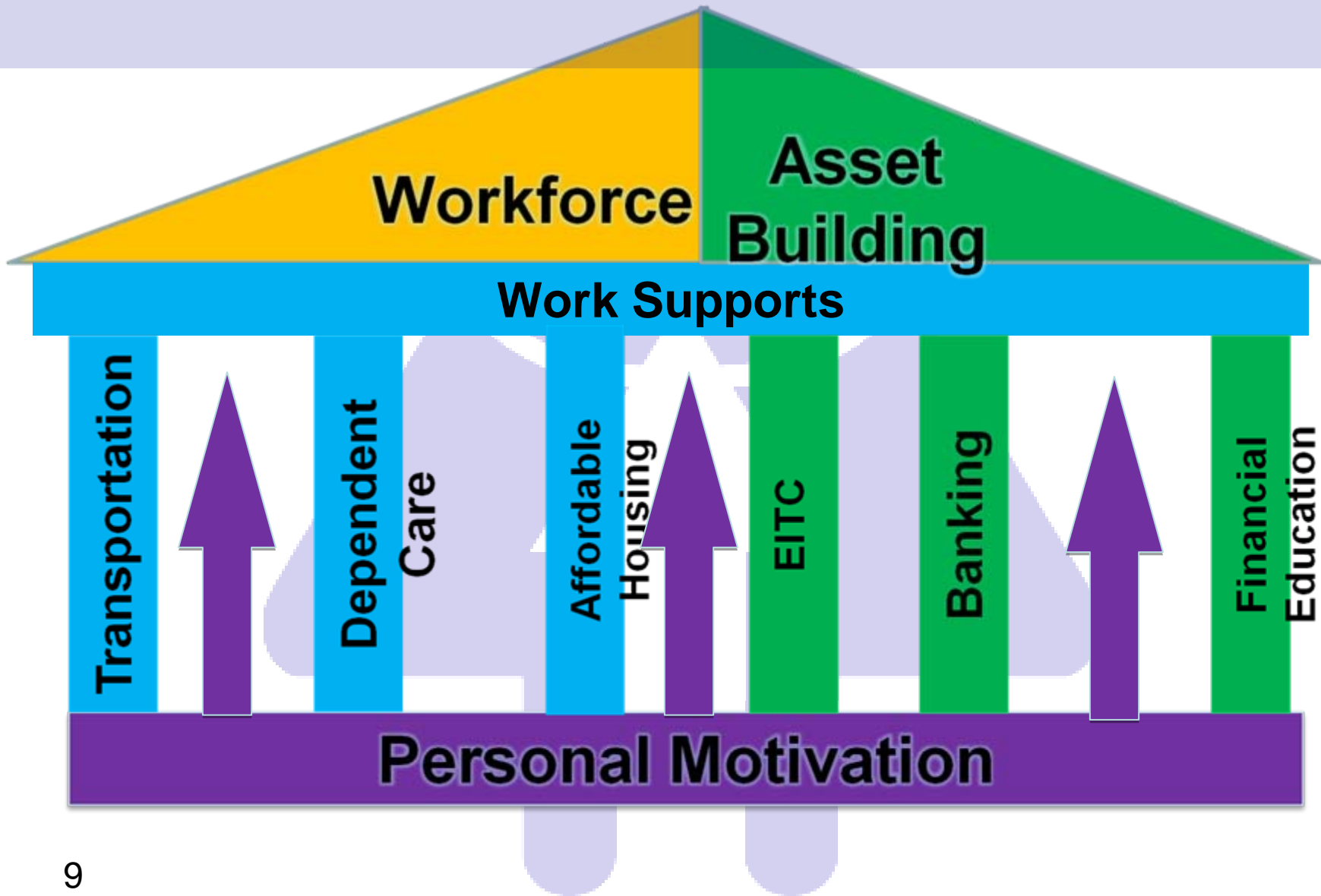
Organizational Development & Collaboration Redefined in 2008

- **Signing Ceremony at Savannah Morning News**
 - 77 organizations sign collaborative principles, formally agree to participate; by end of 08, more than 100 signed agreements.
- **Board Retreat at Lebanon Plantation**
 - Leadership Board discusses top goals; authorizes Transition Team to formally incorporate Step Up Savannah
- **Annual Meeting at JEA**
 - Collaborative partners confirm/determine priorities
- **Public policy Stakeholders Meeting at Civic Center**
 - Policy process defined & CAT Transfer Policy identified as top policy issue

Action Plan

Strategic Goal Framework

- **Develop an educated and skilled workforce**
 - Focus: education/workforce development
- **Improve access to quality jobs**
 - Focus: transportation
- **Support working families**
 - Focus: healthcare and dependent care
- **Help families build assets**
 - Focus: asset building
- **Build quality neighborhoods**
 - Focus: affordable housing



Step Up Savannah Priorities

Economic Independence

Workforce Development/ Adult Education

- GED completion
- Moving people into entry level jobs
- Moving people to self sufficiency
- Benefits for low wage workers

Financial Understanding/wealth building

- # Un-banked to Banked
- # of Financial Education
- # Tax returns & EITC

Work Supports

Support goals of top two priorities
Public Policy/Advocacy

Dependent
Care

Affordable
Housing

Energy
Assistance

Healthcare

Transportation

Personal Motivation

Workforce Development Action Team

- **Step Up partnered with UWCE to submit application for \$1,000,000 federal stimulus grant; funds would support organizational capacity building of community- and faith-based workforce/job and education providers.**
- **Online survey of workforce and education service providers conducted to learn more about “best practices” and challenges faced by providers. Current economic conditions cited as significant challenge for low-income individuals looking for jobs.**

Workforce Development: Employment & Training

- **103 people trained and 50 placed in jobs through the Construction Apprentices Program**
- **152 people employed through the Dept. of Labor at HAS Neighborhood Resource Ctr & St. Mary's Community Center; 1,074 referred to jobs**
- **Three Community Centers begin transition to Centers for Working Families (Annie E. Casey Foundation model, funded through the City, Step Up and the foundation); handed off to United Way. Centers: St. Mary's, Union Mission, St. Pius**

Workforce Development: GED

- **163 enroll in GED classes at HAS Resource Center and Moses Jackson**
 - 82 sections of the test passed
 - 60 students obtain their GED
 - GED Classes to be expanded in 09 to/at Moses Jackson, St. Mary's and Union Mission

Workforce Development Ex-offenders/reentry

- Team working with “Get Skills” to plan a first-ever job/resource fair at Chatham Co. jail in the fall.
- Ga. Department of Corrections, Center for Working Families in Atlanta, SIP and Casey Foundation reps submitted federal Second Chance Act fund application. Grant awards announced Aug.
- Working with Casey Foundation consultant, DFCS, and Savannah Technical College on MOU for a “blind” data match to determine if an FSET program makes sense for Tech. This would bring in new federal dollars for employment, training, education programs and supportive services.

Workforce Development: Working with Employers

- **Work Supports Program: Screenings**
 - **Conducted over 1000 benefits screenings at employer locations to assess eligibility for Food Stamps and Peach Care Children Health Insurance; promoted United Way's 211 as a means to access services**
 - **Integrated Food Stamp and Peach Care eligibility screening into new hire benefits' sign-up processes, piloting with one employer**

Workforce Development: Working with Employers

- **Childcare**
 - Working with Hyatt Hotel and Dependent Care Team to open high quality childcare center for the hospitality industry
- **Transportation**
 - Presented Rideshare system to several employers for dissemination to employees
 - Currently, developing pre-tax savings model for bus passes and process for soliciting employee interest with CAT
- **Scheduled poverty simulation with employers and DFCS workers as primary attendees. Process changes resulting from simulation experience will be documented**

Step Up Savannah Priorities

Economic Independence

Workforce Development/ Adult Education

- GED completion
- Moving people into entry level jobs
- Moving people to self sufficiency
- Benefits for low wage workers

Financial Understanding/wealth building

- # Un-banked to Banked
- # of Financial Education
- # Tax returns & EITC

Work Supports Support goals of top two priorities Public Policy/Advocacy

Dependent
Care

Affordable
Housing

Energy
Assistance

Healthcare

Transportation

Personal Motivation

Asset Building: Tax Returns & EITC

Year Prepared	Returns Prepared	EITC	Federal Refund
2004	1,075	\$724,651	\$1,329,508
2005	1,583	\$1,148,420	\$2,004,510
2006	1,738	\$1,219,808	\$2,219,443
2007	2,574	\$1,228,123	\$2,614,082
2008	3,158	\$1,600,870	\$3,078,804
2009	3,450	\$2,213,674	\$4,099,301

Asset Building: Financial Education

- **Energy assistance program developed to target working poor with \$50K grant from Georgia Power, administered by United Way, Salvation Army, United Ministries and UGA Cooperative Extension**
 - **155 participants went through financial education classes in return for energy assistance**
 - **Average of 4.9 out of 5 satisfaction rate with the program**

Asset Building: Financial Education

- In the second quarter of 2009, Step Up partnered with Consumer Counseling Services delivered 59 educational and outreach opportunities which impacted 797 individuals
- Post-workshop evaluations showed:
 - 88% were able to list 3 new things they learned
 - 68% felt the information would greatly improve their lives (the other 32% felt it would somewhat improve their lives)
 - 80% were extremely likely to use the information they learned
 - Ongoing follow up evaluation process throughout the year
- 22 individuals have received one-on-one financial coaching
- Goal: educate 1,500 individuals in 2009

Asset Building: Banking Taskforce



Asset Building: Banking Taskforce

- **12 Banks and Credit Unions involved**
- **312 accounts opened YTD**
- **Goal: 1,000 people expected to be banked in 2009**
 - Ongoing training for bank officers through 2009
 - Ongoing marketing campaign throughout 2009
- **Alternate Rapid Anticipation Loan (ARAL) with GA's Own Credit Union**
 - ARAL planning for 2009 City wide campaign started
 - 2008 pilot at 9 tax days resulted in 71 loans processed from 164 returns (43% of total returns at pilot sites).
 - \$370,254 total in refunds at pilot sites; \$229,657 total in loans. \$1,700 in losses, but \$26,649 in funds retained in Credit Union accounts after 60 days. Average savings to clients estimated at \$37,985.



Step Up Savannah Priorities

Economic Independence

Workforce Development/ Adult Education

- GED completion
- Moving people into entry level jobs
- Moving people to self sufficiency
- Benefits for low wage workers

Financial Understanding/wealth building

- # Un-banked to Banked
- # of Financial Education
- # Tax returns & EITC

Work Supports

Support goals of top two priorities
Public Policy/Advocacy

Dependent
Care

Affordable
Housing

Energy
Assistance

Healthcare

Transportation

Personal Motivation

Chatham County Safety Net Planning Council Healthcare Action Team

- Since the website www.chathamsafetynet.org went live on April 14, 2009, there have been over 1375 visits from over 1,200 unique visitors.
- Chatham CAN, the specialty referral project funded through Healthcare Georgia Foundation has selected a software program and will begin with a pilot project of specialty care referrals in August 2009.
- The Health Information Exchange project continues to work on contracting with a software vendor and is on schedule to begin the pilot exchange this fall.
- Collection of data for 2008 is close to completion.
- The CCSNPC Executive Director position was approved in the 2009-2010 Chatham County budget.

Work Supports: Policy Issues

- **\$60,000 Grant received from the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation:**
 - Funds will be used to create position at Georgia Legal Services that will focus on Public Policy with Step Up Savannah
- **Affordable Housing Trust Fund**
 - Long-standing goal of creating local Housing Fund to be reviewed and advocated for
- **Education**
 - Ongoing meetings with Superintendent & with Chair of School Board regarding the current perception of the Zero Tolerance Suspension Policy
- **Transportation**
 - Chatham Area Transit bus transfer policy reversed eliminating all transfer fees county-wide

Communications

- **Step Up is contacted regularly by other cities (Charleston, Jacksonville, Pensacola, and Berlin, Germany in 2008) seeking technical assistance and/or information, including Congressional staff members seeking input on potential national poverty policy**
- **City of Savannah and Step Up Savannah participate with a cohort of cities: New York, San Francisco, Miami, Chicago, San Antonio, Seattle, called the Cities for Financial Empowerment**

<http://www.cfecoalition.org>

Communications

- **Annual Meeting, scheduled for 7:30 a.m. Oct. 20 at Savannah Civic Center. Behavioral Economist Mindy Hernandez to speak; first-ever employer awards will be launched, recognizing those engaged in innovative ways with low-wage workers.**
- **Step Up co-chairs quarterly conference calls, hosted by the National League of Cities, among 26 cities with poverty reduction initiatives.**
- **Web site, launched in late April, regularly draws queries from members of the public with questions about poverty, resources, or interest in volunteering in direct services or with Step Up.**



**Poverty is a business issue as
much as it is a human issue...”**

– Eric R. Winger,

President of Savannah Economic Development
Authority and Step Up Savannah Board Member

Step Up Savannah’s Poverty Reduction Initiative

www.stepupsavannah.org