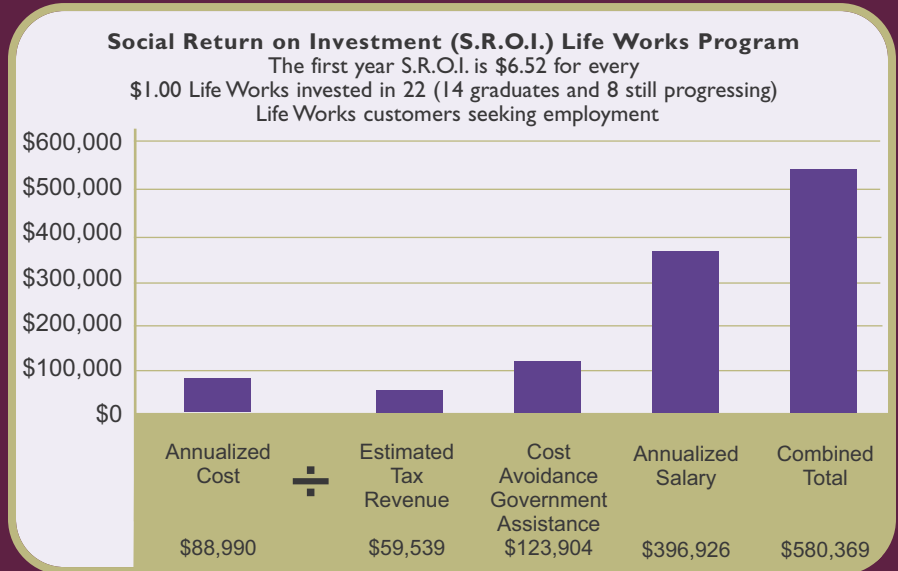
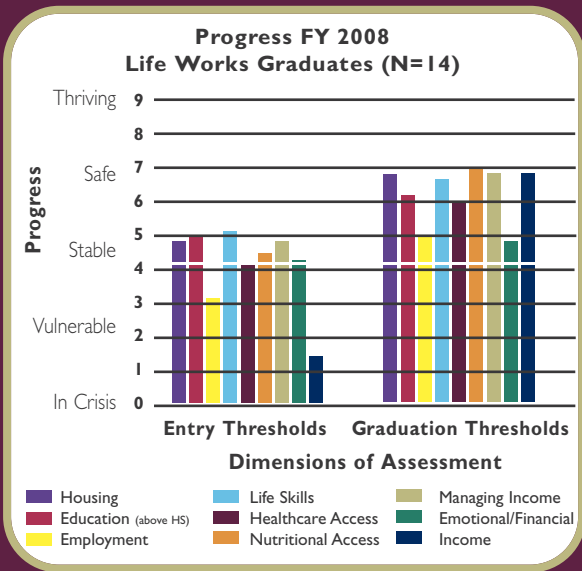


# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT LIFE WORKS

## OUTCOMES

The goal of the Life Works program is to help customers improve their own and their children's quality of life. To do that, Life Coaches help participants set goals they can accomplish within three years with help, support and resources.



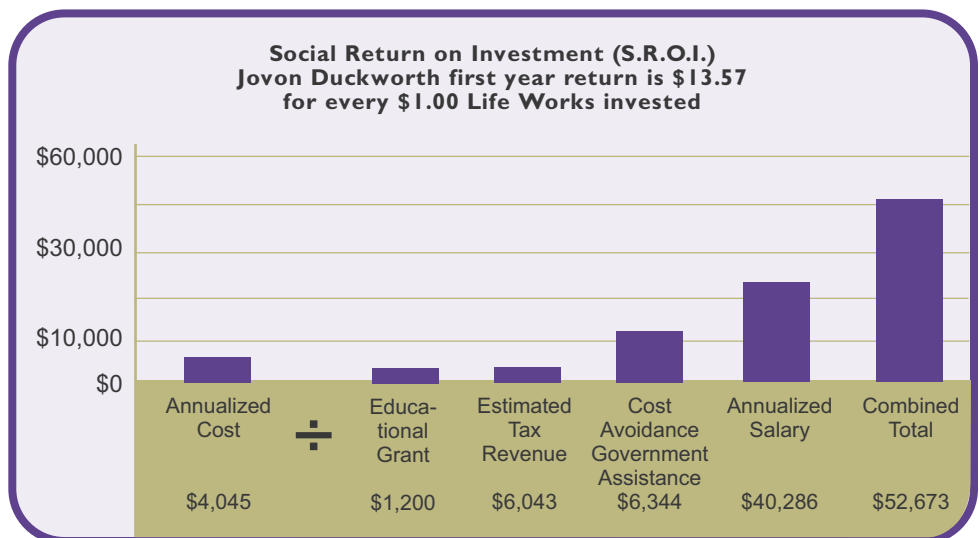
### Jovon Duckworth

"I was an object at rest, staying at rest," says 26-year-old Jovon Duckworth of her life before she found Community Action Opportunities' Life Works program. The former student had trouble paying her bills, worked a succession of low-paying jobs and found herself living in low-income housing, all while losing focus on what she wanted to do with her life. "I wasn't living up to my potential," she says "I knew that I could do better."

Duckworth began to see glimpses of that potential when, in 2005, she was accepted into the Life Works Program and, with the support of her Life Coach, Deb Scott, began the hard work necessary to change her life. Life Works helps people like Duckworth become economically self-sufficient by using Life Coaches who teach their customers how to set goals and improve their lives. "They have so many resources," the mother of three explains. "If I needed daycare, Deb knew who to call. If I needed food, an air conditioner, or a new place to live, she and the other Coaches were like the "Yellow Pages" of community resources."

Today, Duckworth is a proud graduate of the LP Nursing Program at A-B Technical Community College and recently landed a coveted full-time position at the Asheville VA Medical Center. She has a retirement plan and, for the first time in her life, everyone in her family has health insurance. She and her husband are saving to buy their first home, and she is back in school pursuing an RN degree.

"The Life Works program was the force that I needed to move and produce," she says. "That's the way I am now. I didn't want to be a coulda, woulda, shoulda, didn't person. I want to be the person who goes from "having potential" to living my potential."



We use a ten-point scale, originally developed under the Results Oriented Measurements and Accountability (ROMA) federal initiative to evaluate the progress customers make. We look at five conditions – from “in crisis” to “thriving” in nine life dimensions, ranging from housing and employment to education, nutrition and health. When customers enter the program, we assess their status and establish a baseline in each area. Then we review their progress while they are in and when they leave the program, using this same process and scale to show the degree of change they achieved.

The graph to the far left depicts the success achieved by the 14 Life Works graduates who increased their income in fiscal year 2007/08.

We also measure the first year “Social Return-On-Investment” (S.R.O.I.) of 22 customers (near left graph). We compare the amount we spent on these customers to the combined economic and social value they generate over time. Doing so, also lets us know how cost efficient we are over time.



Left to right: Harvest Byrd, Jared Letman and William Letman

### Nurturing Parents

Three and a half years ago, William Letman’s life changed. In the middle of a custody battle to get his son Jared out of foster care, William met Robert Simmons, the coordinator of the Agency’s Life Works for Fathers Program. As a customer of Life Works, Simmons helped Letman get full-time custody of Jared. But Letman also credits Simmons with something more important – helping him to permanently improve the way he parents. Simmons encouraged Letman to enroll in the Agency’s Nurturing Parents Class, co-facilitated by Simmons and Glenda McDowell.

“This program helped me understand what it really is to be a man and to raise a child,” William says as he squeezes 10-year-old Jared’s shoulder. It helped me learn how to communicate in a way that children understand and be a single father day-to-day.”

“It also focused on how to manage finances and how to spend time with Jared in important ways such as at the kitchen table working on homework together.” That also means spending more free time together, especially doing fun activities like swimming.

Jared recognizes his dad’s effort. “He acts different,” he says. “He’s nicer.” Letman’s new approach has helped the once shy boy blossom. Jared has earned school attendance and citizenship awards and is now recognized as a classroom leader.

As Jared’s relationship changed with his father, so has Letman’s relationship with his own father, Harvest Byrd, who wasn’t around much when Letman was small. “I was surprised when he started to reach out to me and how we started to bond. It’s something we hadn’t done,” says Boyd, who admits he didn’t have a big role in raising William. “I have grandchildren I have never seen. He wants to make sure I know my grandkids. It’s good for me and for them. I’m very proud of my son.”

As Letman improves his economic conditions through his continued participation in Life Works, he also wants to advocate for policy changes to help other fathers in the child support system. He believes that he can offer support to men who are struggling to help their children. We believe that he can too.

Jovon Duckworth with her children; Amiyah Massey (3) the baby girl who arrived as Jovon started nursing school, Kailah Massey (8) and Isaiah Duckworth (5).

