

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



Poverty Trends in Savannah

- The rate of poverty is not declining
- Poverty is disproportionate by race
- Female heads of households are moving out of poverty slower
- Disparities between rich and poor are growing
- Poverty is high, wages are low
- Educational attainment is low
- There are many barriers facing those in poverty

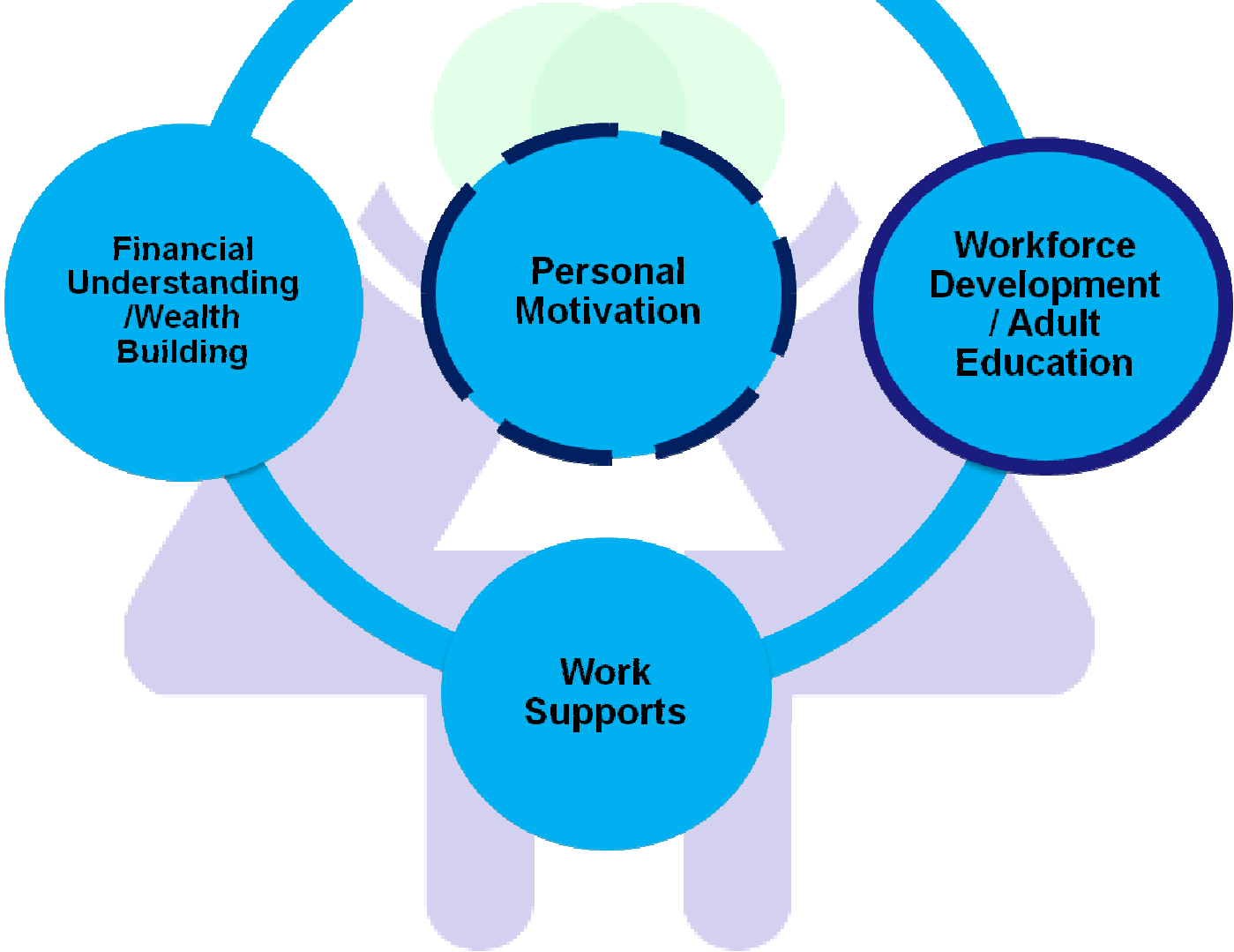
Poverty Simulations



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 2700 participants go through poverty simulations from 2005-2009**

Public Policy



Workforce Development: Centers for Working Families Characteristics: Bundling of Services



- Skills Assessment
- Job Readiness
- Job Search
- Hard Skills Training
- Soft Skills Training
- Career Advancement
 - Academic Education
 - Skill training
 - Career Advising

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- Benefit Screening
- Assistance with benefits applications and submission
 - SCHIP
 - TANF
 - Food stamps
 - Childcare
- Tax Credits; EITC
- Student Financial Aid

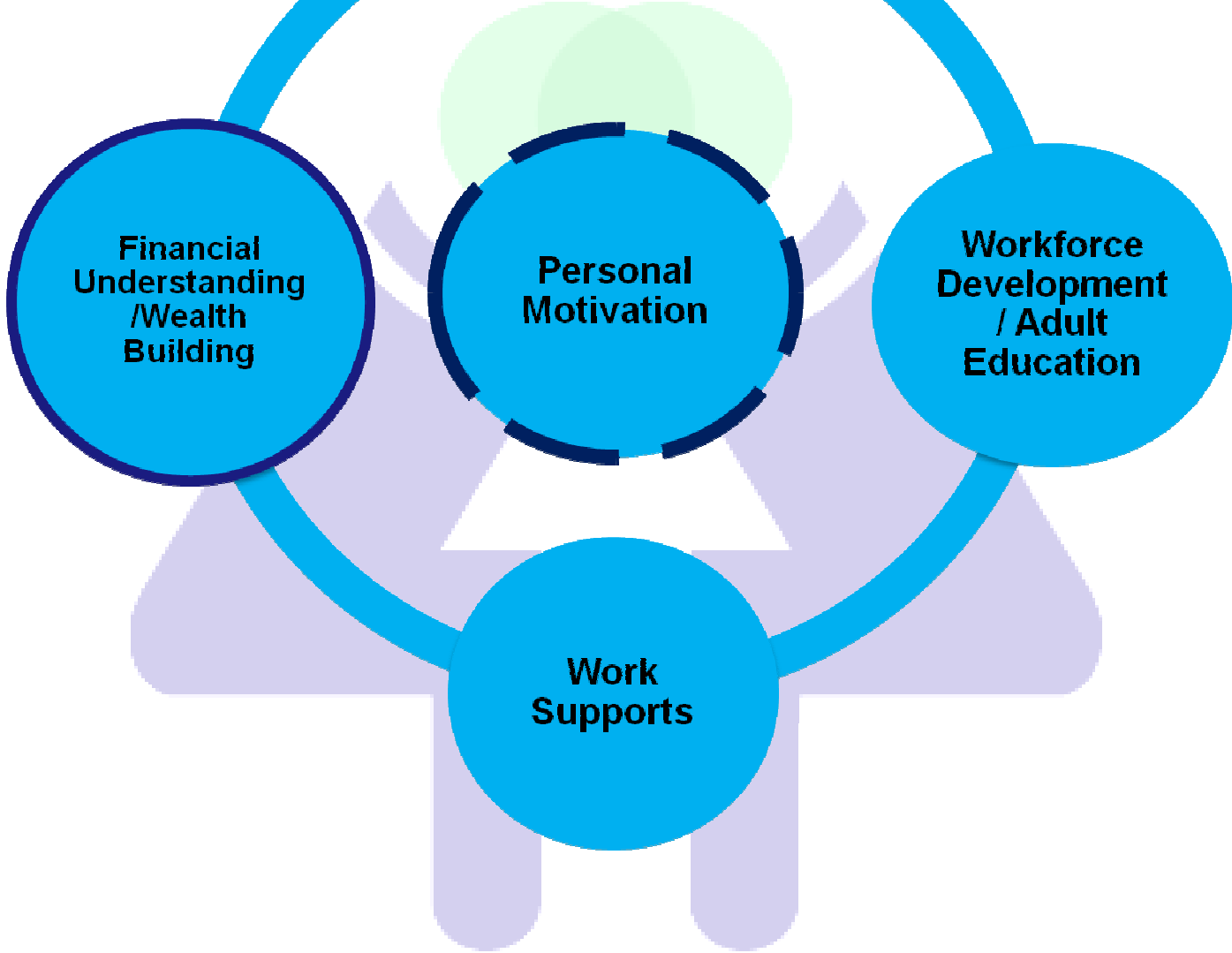
- Educational workshops and financial education classes
- One-on-one financial coaching and counseling
- Financial services products: access to better priced products
 - Savings Accounts
 - Check cashing
 - Short & long term loans

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Workforce Development: Working with Employers

- **Strategies:**
 - Business Priorities/Economic Impact
 - Process Simplification
 - Individualized Reports to Employers
- Increased number of employees using direct deposit, accessing the Earned Income Tax Credit and attending financial education classes
- Conducted over 1000 benefits screenings for Food Stamps and Peach Care Children Health Insurance- integrated eligibility screening into new hire benefits' sign-up processes

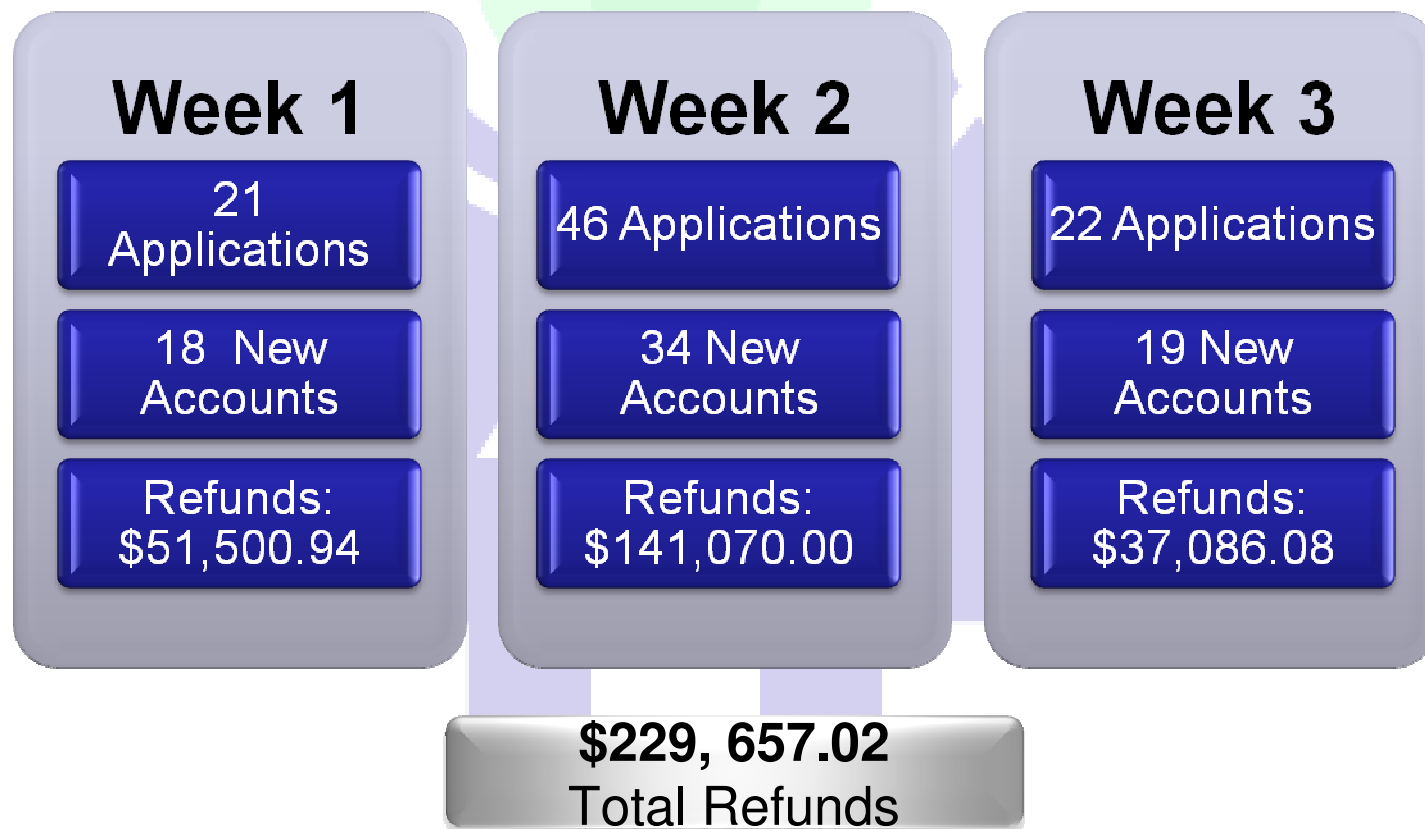
Public Policy



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

Alternate Rapid Anticipation Loan (ARAL) piloted at Employer Sites and Community Centers



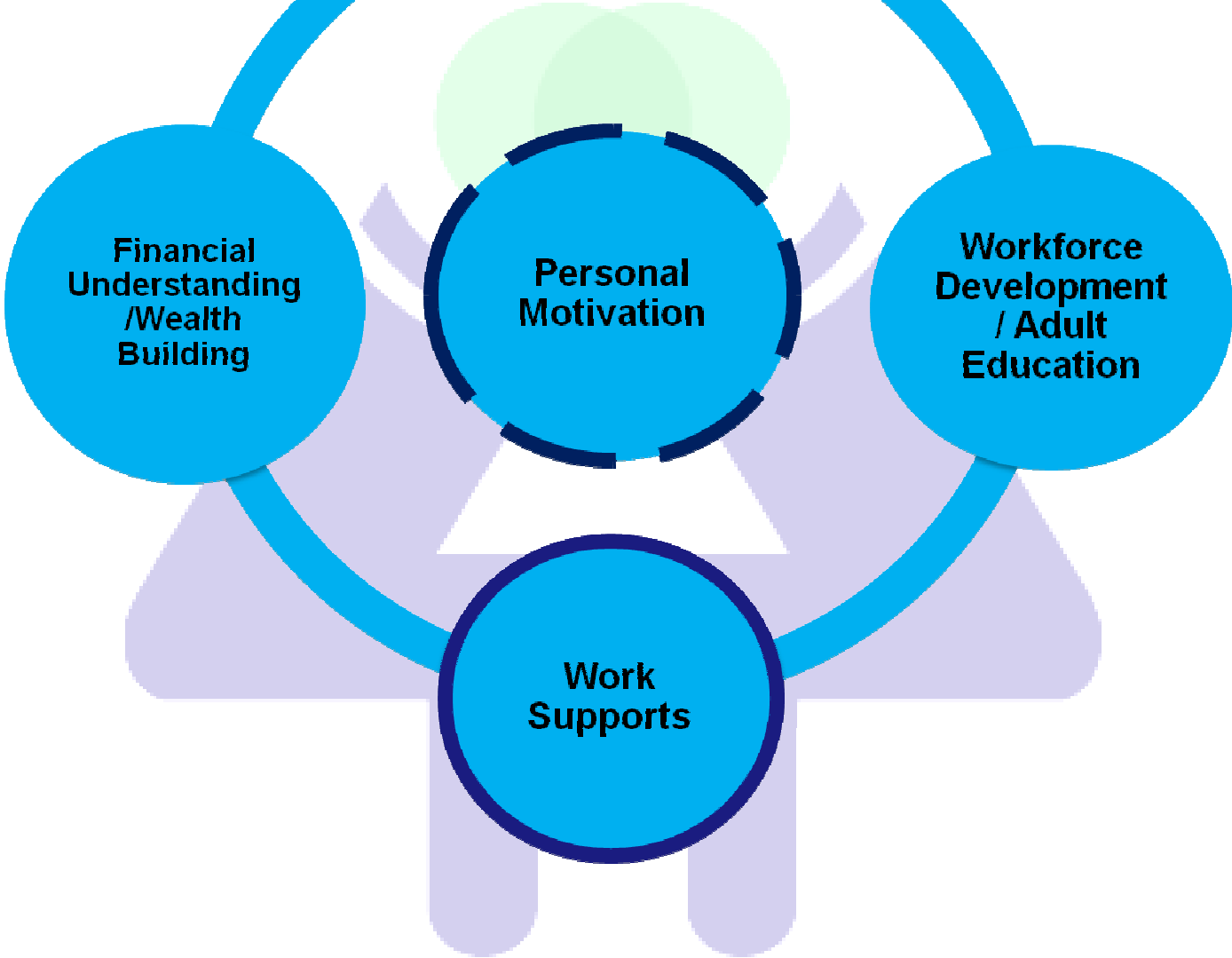
Asset Building: Banking & Financial Education



- 3024 people attend financial education classes in the last ten months
- 12 Banks and Credit Unions involved
- Goal: 1,000 people expected to be banked by April 2010
- 715 accounts opened so far



Public Policy



- **1500 patients redirected from Emergency Departments to primary care homes in 2009.**
- **Colon cancer risk assessments on 236 patients at Community Health Mission.**
- **Health Information Exchange Pilot: J.C.Lewis Health Center and MHUMC Emergency Department in Implementation Phase.**
- **Georgia Trend magazine honors Chatham County & Safety Net Council as best practice.**
- **Chatham CAN engaged physicians in following specialties to provide care to uninsured: ENT (Ear-Nose-Throat), Orthopedics, Gastroenterology, Neurosurgery, Pathology and Clinical Laboratory Services.**

Work Supports: Policy Issues

- **Grant received from the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation in 2009:**
 - Funds used to create position at Georgia Legal Services that is focusing on Public Policy with Step Up Savannah
- **Transportation**
 - Chatham Area Transit bus transfer policy reversed eliminating all transfer fees county-wide
- **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



**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**

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www.stepupsavannah.org