



## The Skillman FOUNDATION

A voice for Detroit Children since 1960

### Southwest Detroit Community Goal:

All youth have positive development opportunities in their home, schools and neighborhoods.

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### NEIGHBORHOOD FACTS:

Chadsey/Condon is a community of 34, 909 residents in Southwest Detroit and is home to an estimated 11,626 children and youth (under 18).

Chadsey/Condon Borders on the north with Warren/Livernois/I-94, on the east with the Jeffries Freeway, on the south with the railroad tracks and Grand Blvd., and on the west with Wyoming and Stecker Streets.

### Neighborhood Statistics:

Total Population: 34,909  
Poverty Rate: 32 %  
Home Ownership: 51 %  
Unemployment Rate: 14 %

# Job Prep Program allows Young People to Prevail

By Eddie B. Allen Jr.

**T**he customer service world has helped open Javianna Gray's eyes to a new world – one of opportunity.

A recent Chadsey High School graduate, the college-bound Detroiters is one of nearly 100 youths who've been trained through a Skillman Foundation-funded employment program since it began in 2008. Having completed Prevailing Community Corp.'s 10-week training and job preparation course, Javianna spent much of her senior year working after school and weekends at the Parts Galore auto retailer at West Warren and Livernois avenues. She describes the months of learning and practical application since starting her part-time job early this year as worthwhile.

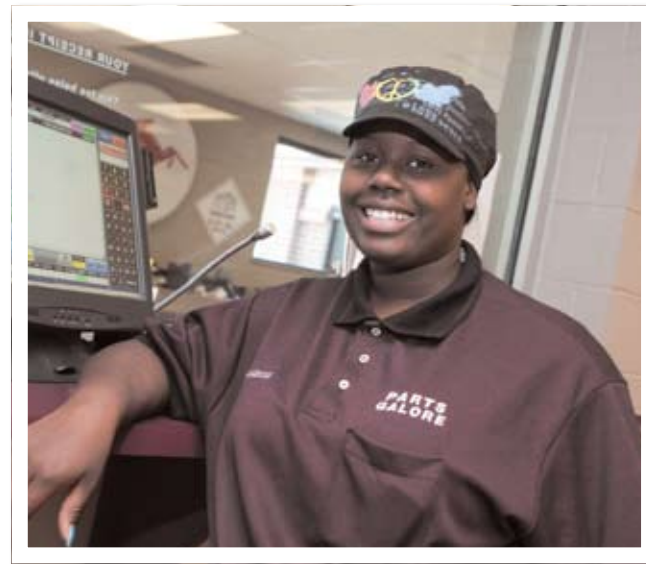
"It was a good experience," says Javianna, 18. "I learned how to handle job interviews, how to manage my time. It taught me how to be punctual."

An unexpected challenge of working at the shop in Chadsey-Condon, one of Skillman's designated Good Neighborhoods targeted for youth grant initiatives, was cultural in nature: The diverse customer base includes Latino and Arab patrons who don't all speak English.

"I do the best I can to help them, or I find someone who can speak their language," Javianna says, adding that the challenge gave her academic incentive. At Wayne State University, she plans to study multiple foreign dialects, along with her communications major, "so I can be fluent."

Chaunci Cline, who operates Prevailing's youth employment program, says it thrills her to see the benefits to Javianna and other trainees.

"It's very therapeutic for me because it keeps me



Javianna Gray shares a smile during her shift at Parts Galore.

connected with the needs of the young people," Cline adds. "The retention rate has been great. I'm really impressed, but again, it's something that the young people want."

Skillman gave Prevailing a \$130,000 grant for 2009 to assist Cline and her staff in their ongoing efforts. The support of West Warren Business Association members who know of the training and preparation that Prevailing offers has been vital, says Cline.

"It has attracted more businesses because they are very eager to work with the young people," she says. "That is an added benefit that we offer the businesses, so it's a dual investment. They know that (the youth) are polished, refined and ready to learn. We're building a pipeline right here in the community."

Upon completing lessons in resume-writing, interview preparation, computer literacy and other ar-

## KIDS MATTER HERE:

The Skillman Foundation's Good Neighborhoods is a 10-year \$100-million program that provides full-scale support to six Detroit neighborhoods where 65,000 children live.

eas, youth are initially placed at 40-hour internships at local businesses. The businesses later have the option to hire interns.

“It’s so important, during this season in our city, that we work together,” Cline adds. A more long-range focus of Prevailing’s youth job component, Cline says, is “wealth-building.” The University of Detroit-Mercy has volunteered vacant land analysis for possible developments that could lead to additional economic and employment opportunities in Chadsey-Condon, she says.

Meanwhile, program supporters like Jacqueline Harrison, Javianna’s supervisor at Parts Galore, are pleased with their staff additions.

“It’s a really good program,” says Harrison. “A lot of the time, it’s not that kids don’t want opportunities, but the opportunities aren’t there.”

She describes Javianna as a pleasant, dedicated employee.

“It’s a win-win,” she adds.

Jim Farida, general manager of the nearby Metro Food Center grocery store, agrees. Farida has three of Prevailing’s program grads employed as baggers and stock assistants.

“They’re very courteous, they like to work,” says Farida. “Whatever I need them to do, they do without question.”

Apart from her own success in the program, Javianna says she recruited six friends who participated in the job training course.

“You learn how to get along with others, how to speak in front of people. It’s very helpful,” she says. “I’ve told people about it...They thanked me.”

*The 2009 graduates: (L to R): Ladell Clay, Alisia Riggs, D’Ajena Davis, Marcellis Cook, Talyle Meaderds, Diamond Davis, Timothy Cook, Olivia Morrissette, Derrick Baldwin, Jamika Morrissette, Lana Rice, Donta McCoy, Ashli Bradley, Kenneasha Williams, Chantel Allen, J’La Williams, Jalissa Smith and Paris Hall. Cline and teacher Shirley Cooper (far right), share in the joy.*

*Talyle Meaderds hurries to the stage to receive his diploma.*

*Ashli Bradley speaks to fellow graduates, friends and family during graduation while Chaunci Cline looks on with pride.*

