



CHAngemakers

Amber Jones was researching jobs recently when she came across information about Jobs Plus, a federal job training opportunity based right in her backyard - Altgeld Gardens.

Jobs Plus is a federal program that funds initiatives to improve employment and earnings outcomes for public housing residents. The program offers supports such as work readiness, employer linkages, job placement and financial literacy.

“I like selling things, and Jobs Plus offered retail training,” said the affable mother of three. “I thought it would look good on a resume if I got some training. I jumped on it because it was a gift; the tuition was free.”

Now, Jones is not only well into her retail training, but she was also simultaneously offered a seasonal job at Kohl’s department store.

That’s a sign that things are coming together for Jones who also holds an associate degree.

“I’m good with people,” she said. “I consider myself a neglected child. A lot of my needs were not met. Some were situations that could’ve been resolved with a smile. And so I noticed that communication is the best thing in the world. The older I got, I expressed more positive emotions to people because I know how it feels to be down.”

Though she lives in Altgeld Gardens, she grew up under the care of father Calvin Jones in the Austin neighborhood. Once she got older with kids of her own, she applied for public housing and settled in at Altgeld Gardens.

She doesn’t plan on staying there.

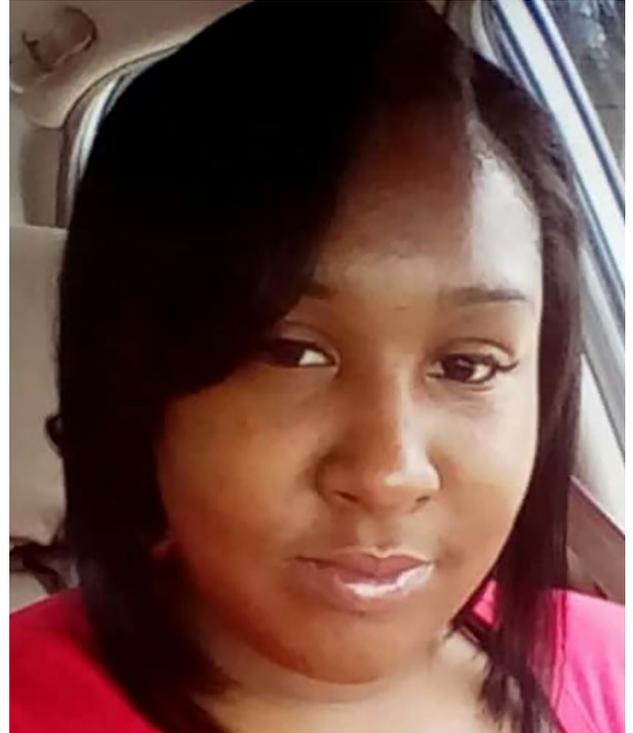
“In five years, I plan on being set in a career. I’m just not exactly sure what yet,” she said. “I plan on being a homeowner and financially stable for me and my children (one boy, age 7; and twin girls, age 3). I’d like to set something aside for them so they can start their education.”

That career could go any number of directions. She could follow the retail path; she could open her own business (she freelances as a hairstylist), or she could do something in front of people with her outgoing personality.

She is a good public speaker, and recently spoke at a Certified Contingent Workforce Professional (CCWP) retail sector opening. She talked about going through the retail industries fundamental program from CCWP’s Pyramid partners.

After a rough childhood, she just wants to be a positive role model for those around her.

“Maybe I can help lift people up,” she said.



Amber Jones, an Altgeld Gardens resident and Jobs Plus participant working to establish a career and a family.