



## Jobs for America's Graduates:

Dropout Prevention, Postsecondary  
Education, Careers and Leadership  
Development for At-Risk Youth

### Student Profile – Vivian Mack



Jobs for Illinois Graduates (JILG)  
Student Keynote Speech, 2006 JAG Leadership Awards Luncheon  
(Pictured here at far right with Senator Barak Obama)

"The skills to succeed, having a strong desire to achieve something beyond what is expected. What JILG means to me is a chance for acceptance. I was born a crack baby, physically disfigured, mentally and internally scared, my life was just beginning but it was already miserable. My self-esteem was low and acceptance from others was non-existent. JILG has given me (for the first time in my life) a chance to just be me and accepted because of my individualism.

My mother is a drug abuser and my father is an alcoholic, my oldest brother [who] plays the role of mom and dad in their absence stole so that my brother, sisters and I could eat. JILG to me means a time for change. One hundred percent blind from one eye and little sight out of the other, put down by the people supposing to love me because of how I looked and never once standing up for myself. JILG has given me the confidence and the ability to voice how I feel and not be looked down on. My instructor Mr. Huff is so encouraging; he gives words of wisdom when thoughts of the past get the best of me. I was seven years old when I was adopted into a dysfunctional home where each day thoughts of suicide flooded my existence, my best friends were insecurities and Excedrin P.M, since I couldn't live with my problems, I choose to sleep them away. With my strongest memory being a time that I was hung out of a fifteenth story project window because my biological mother choose the drugs over my life, young yet already establishing excuses to fail, Mr. Huff helps me to understand that set backs are only set ups for comebacks and that "Failure is not an option...not on his watch".

JILG to me means accepting adulthood, my instructor Mr. Huff helps my peers and I to understand the importance of adulthood, success, and succeeding. After high school I plan to, oh I'm sorry I meant to say "I will" attend a four year university where I will major in Pre-communication / Journalism and in due time become a Journalist. I am the author of my own life and I now understand through the JILG program that it's up to me to dream it, imagine it, sketch it, shape it, build it up and go after it making it happen.

What does JILG means to me? **J**-Just, honorable and fair in ones dealings and actions. **I**-Inerrancy, freedom from error and untruth. **L**-Lesson, a period of instructions. **G**-Grasp, the ability or power to seize, that's what JILG means to me. My instructor Mr. Huff has also taught me to be head strong, if things in life get tough and I become weak and fall, get back up despite put downs by others. Why? Because no one knows the dreams I dream nor the goals I set and it's up to me to make my dream and goals come true.

What JILG means to me? JILG to me means braking out of my childhood shell, holding firmly and steadfastly to any challenge I undergo despite obstacles, overcoming the past, living wisely for the moment and success in the future."