

## VICTORVILLE

# Change for the better

By **Monica Solano**  
 Staff Writer

VICTORVILLE – For most people, the struggles of being a teenage mother are difficult enough. Add to that a childhood filled with family hardships that included being left to raise yourself at a young age, and the chances for success at school and in the workforce are greatly diminished.

Yet for Shantrina Ealy, 17, of Victorville, those obstacles didn't stop her from graduating early from high school, obtaining valuable work experience through her school and becoming a rousing success story for the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board's youth programs.

The programs offer services year round to young people between the ages of 16 to 24 who have had to overcome barriers for a better future. The programs provide free career counseling, training, internships and job seeking services.

"We realize that there are youth in San Bernardino County who face tremendous hardships and challenges that would be difficult for adults to endure, and yet they have the fortitude and determination

to persevere," said San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Chairman James Ramos. "Their resilience and courage is remarkable and we are committed to providing them with the tools they need to succeed, promoting prosperity within our community."

For Ealy, who never knew her father and moved in with her aunt, Lisa Ealy, 50, of Victorville, after her mother went to jail when she was child, the programs offered by the WDB helped reverse a life heading down the wrong path.

"I was never home," said Ealy, who regularly skipped school and spent time at the High Desert Juvenile Detention Center. "I was always leaving and (sneaking) out and never wanted to be there."

Ealy said she was 15 years old and in 10th grade at Victor Valley High School when she discovered she was pregnant. She transferred to another school to finish up her 10th-grade year and gave birth to her daughter in July 2014.

She then enrolled at Goodwill High School in Victorville in the fall and learned about the programs offered by the WDB.

With help and support from the programs and her

aunt, and a lot of hard work on her part, Ealy graduated from Goodwill this past November, a milestone she never expected to achieve just a couple years earlier. And with the work experience she's gotten through Goodwill, Ealy is determined to provide for her daughter, who will turn 2 this year.

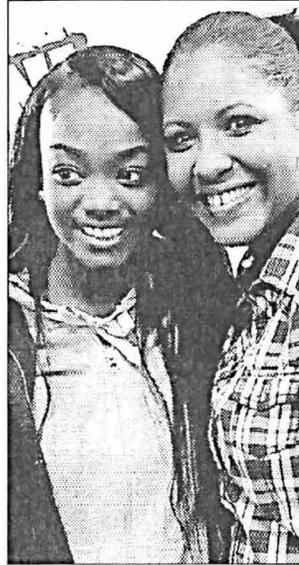
"I've seen my mom on drugs and I'm doing everything to make sure I can be better, and to teach my daughter right," Ealy said.

Ealy got to attend the annual Y4 event at the Ontario Convention Center last fall, which allows WDB program participants to network, participate in workshops, tell their stories and listen to motivational speakers, including nationally renowned author Dr. Alex Ellis.

"So many young people here have incredible stories that could be used as excuses for why they don't progress, but instead they're using these stories as motivation for success in life," Ellis said.

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**Shantrina Ealy, left, stands next to Youth Career Advisor Sabreena Smith. With the help and support of the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board's youth programs, Ealy, who had a child at the age of 15 and dealt with a series of hardships growing up, graduated from high school early and turned her life around. Photo supplied by Goodwill Southern California**