

## A Point of Light

### Austell woman honored for teaching, GED tutoring

By Ashley Hungerford  
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**AUSTELL** — Lenise Mason is retired from West Georgia College. But she's still teaching.

In early 2006, she saw a newspaper advertisement seeking tutors for basic adult-education classes at the Cobb and Douglas Community Services Board's Austell center.

Ms. Mason started as a tutor, helping the teacher in the general-equivalency-diploma program. When that teacher left, Ms. Mason began teaching a class in reading and math skills for adults.

Yesterday, Ms. Mason was honored as the Daily Point of Light award winner.

Each weekday, the Points of Light Foundation in Washington recognizes individual or group volunteers that "have made a commitment to connect Americans through service to help meet critical needs in their communities."

Ms. Mason, who lives in Smyrna, said she was embarrassed when she learned of her award.

"I shouldn't be rewarded for this," she said. "It's already rewarding ... it keeps me really busy, and I have a lot of fun."

She teaches eight to 10 adults two times a week. Her students have varying degrees of mental disabilities and learn on different grade levels.

Mary Robeck, volunteer coordinator, nominated Ms. Mason for the award.

"She's only been volunteering for over a year, but it's been an intense year," Ms. Robeck said. "The students love her. They love the personal attention they get."

After taking over the basic-education class, Ms. Robeck said, Ms. Mason spent hours writing math problems and finding stories for the students' varying learning levels.

"She spends hours of preparation for every hour she is here," Ms. Robeck said.

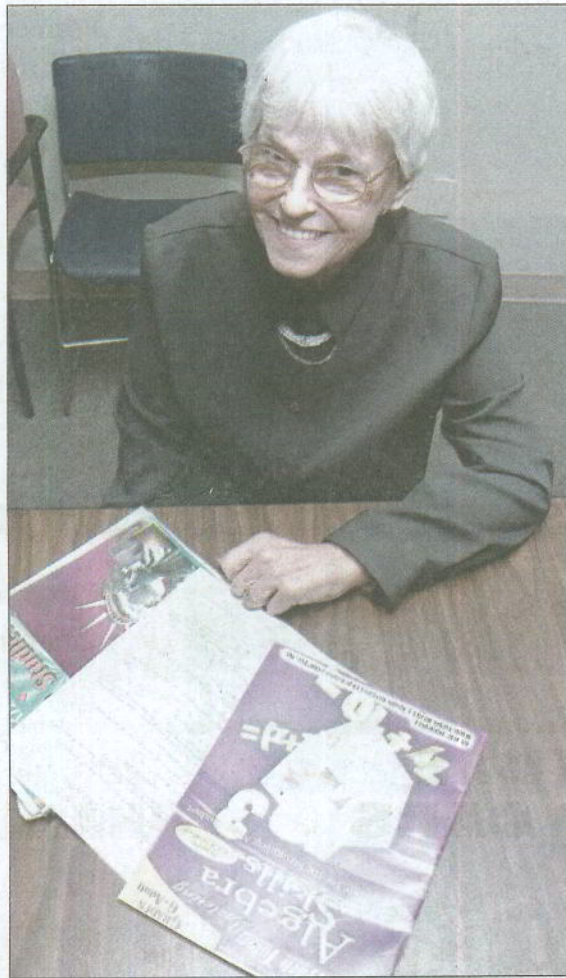
After receiving a grant from the Cobb Literacy Council in June, Ms. Mason was able to purchase some class materials. But she said she still creates some of her own lessons, such as a worksheet on fractions and math problems using play money.

Ms. Mason had been a professor of sociology at West Georgia College. Ms. Mason said a major difference between teaching college students and the Austell adults is that college students have done well in academics, where her students have struggled.

"I have to go over things a lot more times," she said. "I try really hard to make it fun and interesting for them, and not to be negative. I don't want to be negative because that's what they got in school."

Although she does not teach a GED class, Ms. Mason said she hopes her students will eventually earn their high-school diplomas.

But Ms. Mason worries that budget cuts at the center might affect her class.



Staff photo by Thinh D. Nguyen

Volunteer adult literacy and GED teacher Lenise Mason of Smyrna, 67, who teaches at Cobb and Douglas Community Services Board center in Austell, received the Daily Point of Light Award on Wednesday by the Points of Light Foundation in Washington.

And she said she needs more volunteers to help provide individual attention to her students.

The Cobb and Douglas

Community Service Boards provide resources to people with mental or developmental disabilities or addictions.  
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