

# Taking Wing

Ceremony honors 2005 EAGLE winners



*DTAE Assistant Commissioner for Adult Literacy Programs Dr. Jean DeVard-Kemp (center) is flanked by GED Graduate Literacy Ambassador winner Sharon Lindsey (right) and Current Student Literacy Ambassador Melissa Layman (left).*

At a banquet held in January at Atlanta's Sheraton Buckhead Hotel, nearly 600 attendees joined DTAE Commissioner Michael Vollmer and Dr. Jean DeVard-Kemp, assistant commissioner, Adult Literacy Programs, to honor the 2005 winners of the Exceptional Adult Georgian in Literacy Education (EAGLE) awards.

"My heart is pounding," said Melissa Layman as she accepted her statuette and the title of 2005 Current Student Literacy Ambassador. Layman's honor was a moment of personal triumph for her, having survived abuse and homelessness before returning to complete her education. "I have traveled crooked roads and made wrong turns. But I am on the right path now." Layman, a single mother,

enrolled in adult literacy classes to provide a good example for her teenage son, and today is in the Certified Nursing Associate's program at Valdosta Technical College.

After being named the 2005 GED Graduate Literacy Ambassador, winner Sharon Lindsey stirred the crowd with her acceptance speech.

"The Adult Literacy Program has been the master key to unlock the door for unwed mothers like me who had to drop out of high school," Lindsey said. When her children's father died, Lindsey had no income. Now, she is enrolled in the Surgical Technician diploma program at Middle Georgia Technical College. The audience gave Lindsey a standing ovation

as she closed her speech.

"Without the Literacy program, I would still be in the world of 'Can I? If I? Will I?' But now, I say, 'I can, I have and I shall!'"

The two winning Ambassadors were selected from the group of state winners that represented each of the technical colleges.

Dr. Jean DeVard-Kemp commented on the high-energy evening. "I encourage you to take that energy back to your local communities in honor of Exceptional Adult Georgians in Literacy Education."

Commissioner Vollmer said he was left "inspired" by the winners.

"You not only thought you could, you did," he told the awardees. "And that's a great motto to live by." **R**

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**— Sharon Lindsey,  
GED Graduate Literacy Ambassador**

