

M A K I N G A

Difference



THE ANNUAL ADULT LITERACY CELEBRATION is a statewide staff development conference attracting some 1,300 professionals, volunteers, policymakers, and business and community leaders joining together to celebrate their successes in shaping the lives of the thousands they serve. At this year's event, held in September in Atlanta, attendees convened to share information, exchange ideas, report on research and plan future initiatives.

Jane Robelot, newscast co-anchor on Atlanta CBS affiliate WGCL-TV, officially kicked off the event with an injection of enthusiasm for all the achievements of the Office of Adult Literacy. Department of Labor Commissioner **Michael Thurmond** delivered the keynote address at the opening celebration luncheon, acknowledging the strong partnership between the DOL and DTAE under the leadership of **Dr. Ken Breeden**, DTAE commissioner.

The educational component of the conference was jam-packed with 30 seminars on a wide array of topics, including basic skills, workplace partnerships, GED instruction, health literacy and English literacy. **Dr. Jean DeVard-Kemp**, assistant commissioner of Adult Literacy Programs, was a strong presence at all the proceedings, adding characteristic gusto to an already-charged atmosphere.



Attendees examine instructional materials on display at the Exhibitors' Showcase.

Pilar Archila leads a seminar for teachers on cross-cultural issues facing Latino students.



The goal of the Office of Adult Literacy is to increase literacy by mobilizing resources in all segments of a community, not only in schools but also in workplaces. The Workplace Literacy program, which served 3,564 employees in FY02, was spotlighted at a recognition dinner to salute two groups of people: 20 Workplace Education STARS, employees who are pursuing their educational goals; and 25 Workplace Learning Pioneer Award recipients, companies that are new sponsors of workplace programs. Workplace partners **Danny Crutchfield** of Shaw Industries and **John Harrison** of General Motors Corp. emphasized that investment in workplace education

pays considerable dividends.

Colorful personality **Rhubarb Jones**, a member of the State Board of Technical and Adult Education and chair of the Adult Literacy Committee, served as master of ceremonies for the GED awards luncheon and GED rally, mixing humor with heartwarming narrative. A vocal advocate of Adult Literacy Programs, Jones related the story of his mother getting her GED (*see profile of Jones on p. 12*). **Neely Young**, editor and publisher of *Georgia Trend* magazine, delivered the keynote address at the luncheon. "What you do is gold," he told the audience, "because you provide the backbone of Georgia education."

Capping a history of more than 200,000 GEDs issued since 1991, the Office of Adult Literacy presented

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DTAE Commissioner Dr. Ken Breeden with DOL Commissioner Michael Thurmond



Jane Robelot

DTAE board members (from left) Daniel Rather, Dr. Alma Noble, Gwendolyn Goodman, Sharon Douglas, Jimmy Allgood and Harold Reynolds

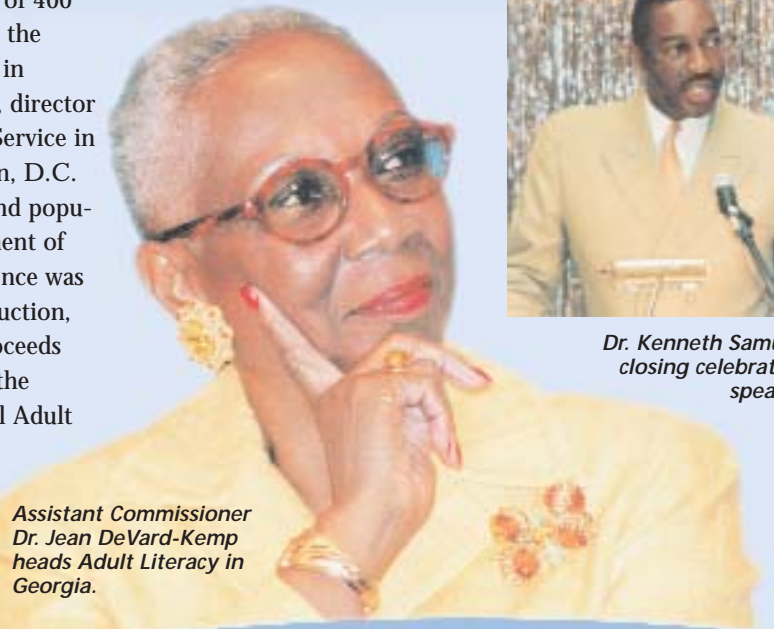


the GED Award of Exemplary Performance to **Robert Alan O'Kelley** for scoring 376 out of 400 on the GED test. This feat also earned him the GED National Award for the highest score in Georgia, presented by **Frederick Edwards**, director of Partner Outreach for the GED Testing Service in Washington, D.C.

A fun and popular component of the conference was the silent auction, with all proceeds benefiting the Exceptional Adult



Danny Crutchfield (left) of Shaw Industries, a Workplace Education sponsor; and **Leroy Persons**, a Workplace Education STAR, who is employed by Macon-Bibb County EOC Head Start



Assistant Commissioner Dr. Jean DeVard-Kemp heads Adult Literacy in Georgia.



Dr. Kenneth Samuel, closing celebration speaker

The Rhubarb Is On!

BY GREG LAND

Bouncing on his seat behind the microphone, Rhubarb Jones' morning patter is booming. "We got Jaw-urge Jones this mornin'," he thunders, as the strains of country classic "He Stopped Loving Her Today" fade. "Lord, that's strong!"

"Whew! That's one of the best country songs ever written," grins Dallas McCade, Jones' morning co-host on WYAY-Eagle 106.7 FM, over the console they share.

"Stronger than white whiskey you can buy on the street in Goodwater, Alabama, I don't mind tellin' you," Jones shouts back, whirling into the spirited give-and-take that has made him a favorite on the country radio dial for 18 years.

Born Warren Jones 51 years ago and raised in Tallapoosa, Ga., Jones began honing the tool of his trade — his mouth — at an early age. In the sixth grade, he recalls, he was dubbed "Rhubarb" for his tendency to argue (taken from the old baseball term for an on-field, bench-emptying fracas).

These days, he's not much for arguing, but he's still talking. And when he's not razzing McCade over her Alabama roots or spinning yarns from his colorful past, the subject of discourse is likely to be one of the many



Rhubarb Jones speaks at the conference.

charitable or educational initiatives he supports. A prodigious fundraiser, he's collected some \$2 million for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and — since becoming a Harley-Davidson rider and fanatic three years ago — participates in annual rides to benefit the American Diabetes Association, Muscular Dystrophy Association and March of Dimes.


Jones and his wife (and fellow Harley fan) Donna have a baby daughter, Presley Francis;

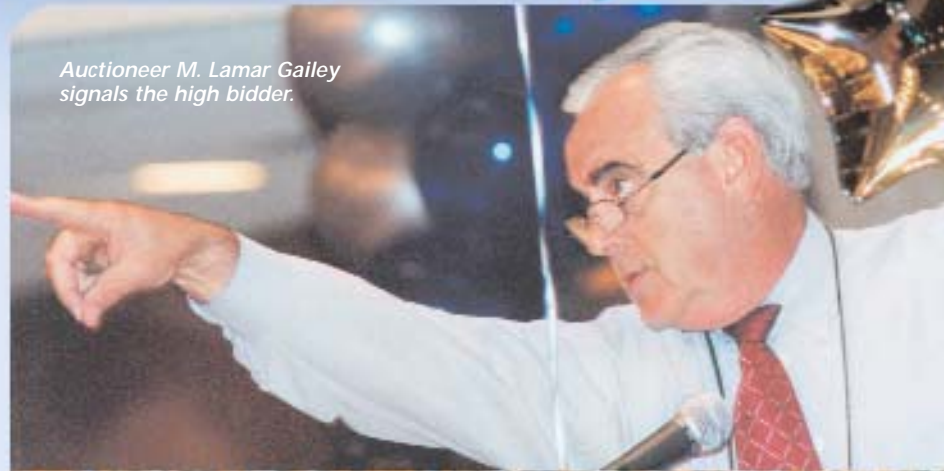
he also has two grown sons from a previous marriage, and four grandchildren. But, even with his Harley fever, extensive charity work and radio appearances (he frequently climbs behind the drum kit at live shows with artists like Charlie Daniels, a close personal friend), Jones still takes particular pride in his work as a member of the Georgia Board of Technical and Adult Education. He represents the 6th Congressional District and has often



Neely Young,
Georgia Trend magazine

Georgian in Literacy Education (EAGLE) student recognition program. Attendees bid on items such as carpets, gourmet delicacies and crafts. In addition, live auctions took place at the end of several sessions with auctioneer **M. Lamar Gailey**, Adult Literacy director at Lanier Technical College and chair of the Silent Auction Committee. Georgia businesses, local organizations, exhibitors and individual supporters contributed the items up for bid.

The closing luncheon highlighted the efforts of teachers and volunteers. To express her gratitude, Dr. DeVard-Kemp presented a poster to each attendee that read, "Thank you for making a difference in the lives of others." Keynote speaker **Dr. Kenneth Samuel**, member of the Georgia Council on Adult Literacy, left attendees energized to set out and continue their mission of advancing the cause of literacy in Georgia. 



Auctioneer M. Lamar Gailey
signals the high bidder.



Above: Teachers and volunteers applaud all the accomplishments in adult literacy over the past year. Left: Robert Alan O'Kelley wins GED award. Below: Frederick Edwards speaks on behalf of the national GED Testing Service.

worked with West Central Technical College, which is close to his home.

"My mother got her GED when I was in the fourth grade, and I remember what a proud day that was," he says soberly. "My philosophy is that education can make the difference between success and failure. My grandmother always said that the odds are stacked against you if you're not properly educated. I'm so grateful to live in a state where there are so many educational opportunities."

Jones' work on the board and hosting of the GED awards have allowed him to meet people whose lives have been changed by the literacy program.

"I get so excited when I meet some of these people who are in their 70s and have gotten their GEDs, and are now going to college," he says softly, shaking his head. "There's an elderly lady who lives down near Warner Robins. She not only raised nine children but she's gotten her GED, and now she's going to technical college."

Jones, whose own upbringing was "pretty hard-scrabble," says he's fortunate to be able to help others share in his own success. "I've just been so lucky," he says. "I think we need to learn to be neighbors again. I'm just glad to be able to do it."

