In this issue:

- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Exploring Resources
- Student Profile
Editor’s Corner

“What’s your name?” This could be the question most often heard in adult education classes in the fall, as new tutoring and class sessions commonly get started again after a summer break. However, are you maximizing your use of that question? Finding out the origin of students’ names can be a great way to get to know students better and develop classroom community. Our page 3 article, “Fun and Learning with Students’ Names,” shares a variety of ideas that go beyond just “name naming.” Use these ideas to help students practice their oral skills.

Giving beginning literacy-level students work that they can practice independently is a crucial part of the learning experience but one that can be challenging, considering the scaffolding and support these students often need. “Developing Independent Reading Skills in Beginning Literacy Learners” on page 5 gives you a template to follow to develop independent seatwork activities. The article also provides a sample story that you can use with your low-literacy students.

On the other end of the spectrum, higher-level students often write short autobiographical pieces to practice their writing skills but struggle with truly descriptive writing during this task. Our article on page 9 gives instructors and students alike tips to produce autobiographical writing that includes more sensory details.

Finally, don’t miss our regular features, Exploring Resources and Student Profile. This issue’s Student Profile features Kathrina Nanan, an award-winning student who began her ABE classes below a third-grade level and is now taking the GED. Her story reminds us of the struggles that many students face—and often overcome—to attend classes and achieve a better life.

The Editor
Fun and Learning with Students' Names

Purpose
To help students and instructors get to know each other better and use language skills by practicing name-focused activities. Although these activities are geared toward ESL students, most could be easily adapted for ABE classes.

Rationale
“What's your name?” is one of the most common phrases you hear in the classroom. You can develop many listening and speaking skills during activities designed to help people learn each other’s names. Using names can make people feel closer. You and the students should work on learning each other’s names as soon as possible. Plus, learning names can provide clues into students’ culture and personal history. The following activity comes from teacher Ros Byrne, of Canberra, Australia.

The Basic Activity
1. Ask students to write the name they want to be called on a piece of folded heavy paper or light cardboard. Students can place this paper on their desk, folded like a tent. Their preferred name should be on both sides of the tent so the instructor and others sitting near them can see the name. Alternately, you can use peel-off name tags. Be prepared to show those who are unfamiliar with name tags how to use them.

2. Have students play “Three Similarities and a Difference.” Students should talk with a partner to find three things they have in common, such as the same number of children or siblings, or a favorite food, color, or sport. If students are at a beginning level, you may want to give them a worksheet with six questions they can ask their partners so they can more quickly find similarities without getting bogged down by the language practice. The partners also should identify one thing that is different between them.

3. The class can play “The Story of My Name.” As the instructor, you should model this activity for students before asking them to try it. Students should then work with their partners and share several facts about their first, middle, or last names. For example, it may be a story about how they got their name, how one of their names has a unique family significance, or why they prefer to be called by their middle name and not their first name. Some students may want to demonstrate how they write their name in their native script.

4. Debrief as a class. Call on students to share their partners’ stories. Discuss whether or not using names (and using them in the preferred way) helps communication.

More Information
Visit the following websites for more information on name-focused activities:

Name Games
http://www.suite101.com/content/name-games-a27398
This site features name-focused ideas that teachers can use as classroom icebreakers.

Popular Baby Names
http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/
The Social Security Administration lists the 10 most popular male and female baby names for each year between 1880 and 2010. The list could help you if you practice American name pronunciation (see article).

Discussing Your Name to Develop ESL Presentation Skills
http://useit.vn/content/view/2603/427/lang,english/
This site features an activity where ESL students can strengthen presentation skills by giving a presentation about their name.
Expansion Activities

- Washington, D.C.-based ESL instructor Sharon McKay has higher-level students write their names vertically and, beside each letter, write adjectives and nouns that refer to themselves. She also has had students write short poems based on the letters of their names.

- McKay also suggests giving beginning-level students the wrong name tags. Then ask them to find their correct name tag. When a student finds the person who has his name tag, he should ask an introductory question identified in advance (e.g., Where are you from? Where do you live?).

- Spend some time discussing what students should call you as the instructor. The rules may be different in their culture. Discuss how teachers in the United States are commonly addressed and what you prefer to be called. If a number of your students have school-aged children, talk about common names for their instructors (e.g., Ms. Amy versus Ms. Jones for instructor Amy Jones).

- Devise a pronunciation activity with common American names. (See the sidebar on p. 3 for a website with a list of common American names that you can use with this activity.) Give students a list with common male and female names, and say each name several times as a class. Ask students which names they like or dislike and which names they have heard before at their work, school, in movies, or other places.

- If you have a number of students whose native script is different from English, have them demonstrate on the board how they write their name in their native language. Have other students practice writing in that script.

- Ask students to draw a family tree. On their family tree, they will name family members. If they are already familiar with words for family relationships, they should also identify each person accordingly (e.g., sister, son, grandfather).

- Play a game called the “Name Wave.” Students and teacher stand in a circle, and the teacher says his or her name and does a gesture at the same time. Then, someone to the left or right of the teacher says the previous name and repeats the same gesture. They should then say their name and do a new gesture. Each student says their name and performs a new gesture while they also repeat the previous names and gestures. (This idea comes from Suite 101—see “Name Games,” with the web address listed on the p. 3 sidebar.)
Developing Independent Reading Skills in Beginning Literacy Learners

by Kathleen Olson, Teacher Trainer, Hillard, Ohio

Purpose
To provide practice for beginning literacy learners in small-muscle work, including hand-eye coordination and handling a pencil, while providing beginning literacy instruction with picture and word discrimination.

Rationale
Learners with a low level of literacy need a lot of practice while they are developing their first literacy skills. Effective learning is based on repetition, and this is especially true for beginning learners. Numerous studies have shown that repetition enables students to absorb information more easily and retain it for later recall. This activity provides a model that teachers can use to encourage repetition with class readings and offers a sample class reading.

The Basic Activity

1. Distribute a short memorable story of no more than 4–6 lines. (You can also use the sample story “House Husband,” which appears on page 7.) The story you use should have high interest for the students, limited and useful vocabulary, and portray a situation to which students can relate. The majority of the words used in the story should be concrete nouns and verbs that can be easily acted out and represented in pictures. Students should know most of the words orally before beginning the reading activity.

   Some instructors may want to enlarge the story; one way to do this is by making a big book using half-sheets of poster board for each page. Each sentence should be accompanied by a picture, as students will initially “read” the pictures until they recognize the words. Pictures can be drawn or enlarged to 8½” x 11”, a good size for the poster board. (The pictures from the story “House Husband” are available on Notebook Online and can be enlarged as needed. See the sidebar on page 2 of this issue for instructions on how to access Notebook Online.) If you decide to make a big book, you can resuse the book with other students in the future—you may even consider lamination.

2. Read the story with the students, explaining any unknown words and pointing out words that repeat often. There should be very few words that are unfamiliar in the students’ oral or experiential vocabulary. Go over the story several times, but change the way the students interact with it each time. For example, one time have students find all the letter b’s in the story or all the words that begin with the letter b. Students will need to go through the whole story to find the letters. The next time, students can count the number of times a key vocabulary word appears in the story.

More Information

Easy Reading for ESL Beginners
http://www.rong-chang.com/nnse/
This site features easy stories for ESL beginners. These stories could easily be used with pictures using the technique described in our article.

ESL E-Books
http://www.elcivics.com/esl-ebooks-free.html
Available via the website EL Civics, the site features a number of e-books on a variety of topics relevant to adults, ranging from buying a car to health, hobbies, and community. The books are free and reproducible. The short stories in the books are more appropriate for intermediate-level students but could be shortened for literacy-level students.

Picture Stories for Adult ESL Health Literacy
http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/Health/healthindex.html
This site features several picture-based stories about health topics relevant to ESL learners, such as stress, depression, domestic violence, and nutrition. Although the “stories” do not have words, simple narration can be added by the teacher or students. The site describes how to use each picture story with beginning ESL students.
3. **Say a word from the story, and write it on the board.** Have students find the chosen word in the story. Each time students share their answers, they should read the sentence in which they found the answer. At first, students will not be able to read the sentences but will be able to guess the sentence from the pictures and from hearing the word (e.g., in the “House Husband” story, they can identify the word *cleans* because of the accompanying picture). With a lot of repetition and other activities, students will soon recognize these words. Once the students have a body of new words, then it is time to begin phonics lessons.

4. **Hold up two identical pictures or identical concrete objects.** If necessary, begin with two items of clothing or two pencils or other concrete objects. (Concrete objects may be necessary since some literacy-level students may not recognize a picture as something representing a real object.) Say the words that are associated with those pictures or objects, such as “John cleans the house.” Elicit that the two pictures/objects are the same. Then hold up two different pictures or objects. Say, “John cleans the house. John buys the food.” Establish that the two pictures/objects are not the same.

5. **For further practice, you can create a worksheet based on Sample 1 that appears on page 8.** Sample 1 shows how students can circle two pictures that are the same in each row. The pictures you use would have to match pictures seen in your story. Before you do this kind of practice, demonstrate the word *circle*.

6. **Then, you can provide further practice with a worksheet based on Sample 2 on page 8.** In Sample 2, students are still circling the two pictures that are the same, but they are both looking at pictures and looking at the sentences that appear under each picture. In Sample 1, they only see pictures.

7. **Further practice can be modeled after what is shown in Sample 3.** In Sample 3, the same picture is used three times. Students should circle the two items with the sentences that correctly describe what the pictures show. This practice may need some modeling before asking students to do it. Students should not be asked to write or sound out the words at this stage. Note that the worksheet on page 8 provides a sample of the activities that can be used with literacy-level stories, but you can expand the practice with other picture/sentence combinations.

**Expansion Activities**

Other activities related to class stories could be:

- Show students one picture, and provide two sentence choices. Have students circle the sentence that matches the picture.

- Provide three sentences—two that are the same and one that is different—but no pictures. Have students circle the two sentences that are the same.

- Read aloud a sentence from the story; students circle the sentence they hear.

- Provide a personalized selection of sentences that students answer yes or no to. The sentences can relate to the story and their life (e.g., *I buy the food. I clean the house.*)
House Husband

1. John is in the house.
2. John buys the food.
3. John does not go to work.
4. John cleans the house.
5. John is a house husband.

Adding Sensory Detail to Autobiographical Writing

Purpose
To encourage students writing autobiographical pieces to add more sensory details to their writing.

Rationale
“Write about what you know” is common advice for new writers—so it’s also common for advanced ESL and ABE students to work on autobiographical writing assignments. However, this writing most often follows a similar staid theme: “My name is [insert name here]. I was born in [year and/or city name here]. I have [insert number] brothers and sisters.” Then the writing goes on to mechanically list when and where the person attended school, started working, and got married and/or had children. This article describes one way to encourage less predictable student writing. In this activity, students will focus on one life event and add sensory details to it. The activity is adapted from Writing Well: Write, Revise, Succeed! which was written by Libby Wilson and published by New Readers Press in 2006. This lesson assumes that students already have done some work on the general process of revising and editing their writing.

The Basic Activity
1. Distribute the following two writing samples to students. Read both samples aloud.

   **Sample 1:**
   The big dog growled and started chasing me. I ran as fast as I could.

   **Sample 2:**
   The big dog showed his yellow fangs, snarled deep in his chest, and raced towards me. As I fled, I heard his snapping jaws and pounding feet behind me, gaining every second.

   Ask these questions: Which writing makes you feel the writer’s fear? Why? What examples of sensory detail—sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures are in these writing samples? Underline those examples and discuss them. Explain that sensory details are important in autobiographical writing because they attract the reader’s attention and make the writing unique. If you have other examples of writing that use good sensory details, show them to students at this point. Have them identify the sensory details. (You can also explore examples from the student writing found on the websites listed in this article’s sidebar.)

   Introduce the concept of “show, don’t tell” to encourage strong sensory-based writing.

More Information
Reading other students’ writing may help inspire students when they write their own stories. Although not all sites listed here focus on autobiographical writing, they serve as interesting examples of student writing.

The Adult Literacy Education Wiki: Student Writing
http://wiki.literacytent.org/index.php/Learner_Perspectives:_Student_Writing
This site is a compendium of various examples of student writing found online.

Journeys: Student Writing from the Minnesota Literacy Council
http://www.themlc.org/journeys.html
Journeys is a magazine published once a year by the Minnesota Literacy Council that features the writing of adult education students. The magazine can be found online for free (including back issues), or hard copies can be ordered for $7 each. In addition to the online magazine, the website has a teacher’s guide on how to use the publication with students.

continued on page 10
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http://wiki.literacytent.org/index.php/Learner_Perspectives:_Student_Writing
This site is a compendium of various examples of student writing found online.

**Journeys: Student Writing from the Minnesota Literacy Council**
http://www.themlc.org/journeys.html
Journeys is a magazine published once a year by the Minnesota Literacy Council that features the writing of adult education students. The magazine can be found online for free (including back issues), or hard copies can be ordered for $7 each. In addition to the online magazine, the website has a teacher’s guide on how to use the publication with students.

continued on page 10
2. Tell students that they will choose one experience from their lives to write about, and they will focus on using sensory details effectively as they write. The event should be something memorable—something particularly emotional, shocking, or out of the ordinary. Encourage students to think of both big and small events—for example, someone’s story of coming to the United States could be a good topic, but one interesting incident that occurred during that journey could just as easily be the focus. Ask students to brainstorm possible ideas on paper and discuss them with a partner.

3. To give students practice writing with sensory detail, have them complete the following mind-mapping exercise:

a. Ask students to think of a food but not to tell anyone else what their food is. They should write the name of the food in the center of a piece of paper and draw a circle around it.

b. To one side of the food circle, they should write the word “ingredients” and draw a circle around it. They should draw a line to connect that circle with the circle around the name of the food. Ask students to think of the ingredients in their food and write the ingredients in small subcircles.

c. Students can then add similar circles to describe what the food looks, smells, feels, sounds, and tastes like. For additional practice, they can do circles with steps for preparing the food and reasons why the food is or is not good for you.

d. Ask students to write a paragraph describing their food without naming it. They should give their paragraph to a partner, and their partner should try to guess the food. The description should be strong enough for the partner to correctly guess the food.

e. For additional practice, bring in food that lends itself easily to sensory description (e.g., an orange, a spice, a colorful doughnut). Have students brainstorm what that food looks, smells, feels, sounds, and tastes like.

f. For variety, you can try this same kind of activity with holidays, modes of transportation, clothing, sports, or places to eat or visit.
4. Now that students have some practice writing with sensory details, they can begin work on their stories. Students should consider the main events of the story and what happened first, second, third, fourth, and fifth. They can write the main events in the boxes on page 12. If they need additional boxes, they can continue on their own paper.

5. Ask students to consider what they saw, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched as this event occurred. They should write what they remember in the second set of boxes on page 12.

6. Students should number each sensory detail from step 5 according to where it fits in the story. For example, if the smell of oranges hung in the air during the event described in main event box 2, they should put a number 2 beside that sensory detail.

7. Remind students of words that can help them move from one event in the story to the next. Put these words on the board or have them ready on a handout: first, next, then, later, during, before, soon, until, when, as soon as, and meanwhile.

8. Prompt students to begin writing, focusing on one main event in each paragraph. They should insert sensory details where necessary and add transition words, such as those mentioned in step 7.

9. Ask students to review their stories using the rubric on this page. They should circle whether their story fits the Well Done!, OK, or Needs Work category according to Audience, Structure, Content, Organization, and Word Choice. (This rubric can be photocopied as needed.)

10. Students should then share their stories in pairs. Partners should give feedback on the following:

• Is the sequence of events clear? Should anything be reordered?
• Does the writing include sufficient sensory details? Can you think of any words that would describe things in a stronger way?

continued on page 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Well Done!</th>
<th>OK</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Story is written to appeal to its audience.</td>
<td>Not clear for which audience the story is written.</td>
<td>Story is inappropriate for its audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Well-structured story with a clear beginning, middle, and ending.</td>
<td>Opening does not grab reader’s attention. Ending feels incomplete.</td>
<td>Events have no clear beginning or ending.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Story is full of specific sensory details that bring the experience to life.</td>
<td>The writer includes many details, but they don’t convey emotional content.</td>
<td>The story has few details; those it does have do not engage the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Story moves smoothly from an interesting beginning to an engaging middle to a satisfying end.</td>
<td>Sometimes hard to follow time sequence.</td>
<td>Story does not flow. Time sequence seems to jump around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>The story uses specific nouns, verbs, and colorful adjectives.</td>
<td>The story uses common, general, and less interesting words.</td>
<td>Vague, overused words make the story seem boring.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Get Ready to Write

Consider the main events of your story. What happened first, second, third, fourth, and fifth? Write each main event in the boxes.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What did you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch during your story? Write what you remember in the boxes below. Which event above does each item relate to? Write the number of the event next to each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sights</th>
<th>Sounds</th>
<th>Smells</th>
<th>Tastes</th>
<th>Textures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
11. Ask students to revise their writing according to their own self-feedback and the feedback from their writing partners.

12. When finished, students should share their writing in the same pairs and pick one of the following descriptions that best fits the revisions:

- **Well Done**: New information improves the story and is smoothly combined with original draft.
- **OK**: New information added but not combined well with the story.
- **Needs Work**: Very little change in revised story.

Some students may need to add additional information to their story according to their partner’s evaluation.

13. **Students should make editing changes with the help of editing checklists commonly used in class.** (Or, you can use the Editing Checklist from Writing Well, which can be found on Notebook Online. See instructions on p. 2 for how to access Notebook Online.)

14. **Students can prepare a final copy of their writing.** For additional expansion, students can illustrate their story, give it to someone as a gift, publish it online (see sidebar below), have a class storytelling session where friends and family are invited, or create a class book of stories.

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**More Information on Publishing Writing**

Publishing students’ stories can make students feel like writers, which strengthens their confidence in their writing ability. With the Internet, publishing student writing is easier than ever. Options range from publishing on a class wiki (see below) or website to producing a class book to encouraging the more ambitious students to self-publish.

**How to Start a Wiki**
http://www.wikihow.com/Start-a-Wiki
This site explains how you can start a wiki, a website that you can edit and where others can contribute.

**How to Self-Publish a Book**
Discover how to self-publish a book, whether it is a compilation of student writing or an autobiography.

**“I’m a Writer Now!”**
http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2192
This article discusses the process of starting a newspaper written by English language learners. Although the students in the article are high-school level, some of the same ideas could be applied in an adult education classroom.
**U.S. Conference on Adult Literacy**  
[http://www.USCAL.org](http://www.USCAL.org)

Plan now to attend the inaugural U.S. Conference on Adult Literacy (USCAL), to be held November 2–5 in Houston, Texas. The conference will feature various workshops, presentations, and professional development opportunities. Sponsored by ProLiteracy, USCAL will provide a unique opportunity to forge new partnerships among national organizations concerned with adult literacy, ESL, and basic education; workforce development; citizenship preparation; adult learner leadership development; and financial, health, and information literacy. Creating a forum to accomplish this—while providing expert professional development and training opportunities for community-based adult literacy programs and providers—is the central mission of this innovative conference.

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**News for You Online App**  
[www.newsforyouonline.com](http://www.newsforyouonline.com)

*News for You* Online now has an app for iPhones and iPads. This online news source for English language learners and basic literacy students can now be accessed through mobile devices, making learning accessible anytime, anyplace. The app shares the same features as newsforyouonline.com, including audio, interactive exercises, vocabulary, and more. The app is free to download from the iTunes store. To access the complete content, you must be a subscriber to *News for You* Online. Subscribers to the print version of *News for You* will be able to access the top two stories using the password printed in their weekly papers.

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**Toolkit for Making Written Material Clear and Effective**  

Published by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, this 11-part toolkit provides comprehensive information on how to make written material in printed formats (such as brochures, fliers, and fact sheets) easier to read, understand, and use. Although the information available via the toolkit is geared toward creating materials for users of Medicare and Medicaid, its principles can apply to make any kind of written information more effective. Sample parts of the toolkit include “Guidelines for Writing,” “Guidelines for Design,” “Using Readability Formulas,” and “Material for Older Adults.” The website provides an overview of the toolkit and individual links to each of its 11 parts.
Using Facebook in Your Class
http://tinyurl.com/3scnszd
Set up as a slide presentation, the first website guides instructors through privacy settings on Facebook so you can set up a classroom page via Facebook. It also addresses the possible value of using Facebook with your class or students. The site provides a discussion of some of the privacy and professional issues that arise when using Facebook with a class. The second link is to one of a series of three videos in which an ESL teacher demonstrates how he uses Facebook when teaching.

National Adult English Language Learning Professional Development Network
http://www.ell-u.org/
English Language Learner University (or ELL-U for short) is a free learning portal for ESL educators, who can use the site's professional development and learning opportunities both online and as part of face-to-face events at teaching conferences. Registration with ELL-U is free, and educators can access training in evidence-based instruction, leading adult ESOL experts, and other resources. ELL-U also features a message board and online courses.

Lemons for Literacy
http://athome.readinghorizons.com/lemonsforliteracy/
Have fun while helping to raise money for literacy. Supported by Reading Horizons, Lemons for Literacy allows users to play literacy-related games. For each correct answer given on the site, money is donated toward literacy materials for a person in need. Game options on the site include word matching and definition matching (for each correct answer, the site gives you a slightly more challenging question). The site also can help learners with the option to hear word pronunciation and word definitions while playing various games.

Learning to Achieve: Helping Those with Learning Disabilities
http://mp.cls.utk.edu/
Instructors can use 60- to 120-minute online modules on this website to better help their students with learning disabilities. The modules, all under the “Learning to Achieve” name, include Accommodations, English Language Learners, Neuroscience, and Professionals’ Guide to Educating Adults with Learning Disabilities. The modules are offered through the U.S. Department of Education’s Literacy Information and Communication System, also known as LINCS. Participation in the modules requires free registration.

Poem-A-Day
http://www.poets.org/poemADay.php
Inspire reading and writing students' creativity with Poem-A-Day. The site, sponsored by the American Academy of Poets, will send you a poem every day by email. These poems can be used with students in a variety of ways. Some ideas: Students can say what they like or don't like about each poem, teachers can share poems from famous poets, teachers can focus on certain types of poetry that students might be studying (e.g., limericks), or students and teachers can connect poems to their lives.

Register to Vote
https://registertovote.org/
With the 2012 presidential elections about a year away, teachers can use this time to help qualified students register to vote. On Register to Vote, you select your state of residency and fill out the required residency information, and the website will create for you a customized voter registration form that you can print and send to your local election offices. Remember to check how far in advance you must register in your state to participate in an election; registration is usually required 30 days in advance in most states, according to Register to Vote.
It’s not always easy for adult learners to get to class. There can be work schedule conflicts. Family members might get ill. Childcare plans don’t always work out. Cars can break down, or bus routes can change (or be nonexistent). Sometimes there’s just a plain lack of confidence in what one can learn in a traditional classroom setting.

Kathrina Nanan, 22, of the Mobile, Alabama, area, has faced and overcome all of those obstacles with her ABE and GED classes at Goodwill Easter Seals of the Gulf Coast. When Nanan came to the program in 2005, she was below a third-grade level in reading, math, and language. She entered ABE classes, working both in the classroom setting and with a volunteer tutor. She came to class regularly despite having two young daughters, a rigid schedule at her daycare job, and only one car that she and her husband shared.

By 2009, Nanan had improved to a 7.1 grade level in math and a 9.6 grade level in reading. “Kat came to class with a positive attitude, ready to work and ready to learn,” according to Erica Jones, Nanan’s former instructor. Her dedication can be measured in paper—literally. The Goodwill Easter Seals program has a picture of the average folder of work completed by ABE students next to the folder of Nanan’s work. Her folder is double the size of an average one. Nanan’s grade level progress in learning prompted a promotion to GED prep classes in 2009.

Nanan has had to change her class location several times, but that has not deterred her from coming to class. She even studied during a time when both she and her daughters got sick. “She continued to pick up classwork to take home so that she would not fall behind,” Jones says. Nanan has always made an effort to stay in touch with instructors during her various challenges, says Goodwill Easter Seals program director Elizabeth Dominick. Nanan’s dedication prompted her program to nominate her for the Dollar General Student of the Year Award, an honor she won in 2010. She attended the awards ceremony in Chicago last year, making sure her attendance fit around her daycare work schedule, says Dominick.

In March of this year, Nanan took the GED test. Like many students, Nanan did not pass her first time around. She passed all sections except math and writing and plans to retake the test after raising her level in those two areas. Once she passes the test, Nanan says she would like to attend college and study for a healthcare-related career.

Nanan hopes her story will inspire others and help better her children’s future. Winning the Dollar General award is not the only bragging point Nanan can claim. She and her family helped build their new Habitat for Humanity home last year.