

*Remarks for the
GED Testing and Senior Service America Partnership
May 6, 2003*

- Mississippi is taking on a different image
 - Image of a state moving faster than anyone else into the 21st century
 - A state that's competing and leading in the global marketplace
 - A state that's setting new standards in education and economic development

- Education for our children is and always has been a priority for me
 - Believe we should build our future based on what our future can be

- Also believe in importance of life-long learning
 - Never too old to learn or use your knowledge
 - Adult education programs like Senior Service America promote this learning

- Contribution of older Mississippians equally vital to our state's success

We want to strengthen the partnership between our adult education programs, GED testing centers and Senior Service America programs in Mississippi. It's always exciting, as well as challenging, to bring agencies together to help our people – in this case, older Mississippians – improve their quality of life through education.

Whether it is acquiring a GED, help with finding a job or worker training, these programs have a positive effect on peoples' lives. It's good to know there are programs like Senior Service America offering specific help in these areas.

More Americans than ever are passing the GED tests to earn what they missed years ago – a high school credential. Senior Service America helps 15,000 senior citizens a year get training and jobs through the Senior AIDES program.

With the GED, you can prove what you know. With Senior Service America, you can put that knowledge to work.

Today, we're excited to honor Mrs. Louise Sinclair from McComb, Mississippi. You've heard the old adage, "better late than never." For Mrs. Sinclair, 83 years young, it was well worth the wait.

She received her GED through Copenhaver Lincoln Community College's adult education program and testing center. She is one of the oldest GED graduates in the state of Mississippi.

Mrs. Sinclair has thought about getting her GED ever since she quit school two weeks into her ninth grade year. She married at a young age and began raising her family. She has battled a hearing problem and cancer, but the idea of getting her GED never left her.

In 1992, she enrolled in the Senior AIDES program sponsored by Copiah Lincoln Community College. The program enrolls economically disadvantaged persons aged 55 and older to work part time in government or non-profit agencies. She's presently assigned as a clerical aide for the Mississippi Department of Corrections in McComb.

It was through the encouragement of Brenda Brown, director of Co-Lin's Senior AIDES program that Mrs. Sinclair again thought about the GED. She enrolled in an adult education class at Co-Lin and, with strong determination and true grit, passed the test.

Today, she keeps her GED diploma by her front door so everyone who comes to visit her can see. Her advice is simple – “it’s never too late.”

Mrs. Sinclair, I’d like to give you this as a token of our appreciation, and admiration, for you.

Congratulations on being chosen as a spokesperson for the GED, and thank you for the example you set for all Mississippians, young and old.