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## Community Assistance Center volunteer wears many hats

articles

by **Bobby Tedder**

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Special Photo Community Assistance Center volunteer Frances Hinson

Frances Hinson's body of work at the Community Assistance Center in Sandy Springs perhaps adds a whole new dimension to the term "jack-of-all trades."

Hinson has held down three volunteer posts there — perhaps each as demanding as they are rewarding — for two and a half years. Client interviewer, income tax preparer and English as a second language instructor are the hats she wears.

"I moved here [from Seattle] in September [2011] and by Thanksgiving I was helping out at CAC," Hinson said.

As a client interviewer, Hinson, as gatekeeper, is charged with meeting with those seeking emergency financial assistance and/or food and clothing. The interviews themselves are designed to determine what a prospective client's needs are and whether the center can assist.

"The client interviewer position is an emotionally demanding job, as [you] meet with people who are facing unexpected financial crisis such as job loss or medical emergency and are seeking assistance in paying necessities such as rent or utility bills," said center spokesperson Kristen Ristino. "With this assistance, the CAC works to prevent homelessness and hunger in our community."

Although disabled — her mobility slowed/aided by her trusty cane — Hinson is counted on to make the rounds in her various roles.

Case-in-point, she is also a vital cog in the center's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance corps.

"It's fun, but I can see where it can be so intimidating to people to have to file their taxes," said Hinson. "I guess if you like numbers and you like doing that sort of thing, it's a blessing to be able to help other people with that."

Fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, Hinson also holds down the fort as a language teacher.

"I've [helped] people of all ages and from all over the world — China, Russia, Brazil, Mexico, Iran — not what you would necessarily expect," she said. "And, I've seen a surprising number of elderly people. ... It really is a lot of fun because they're so excited to learn English."

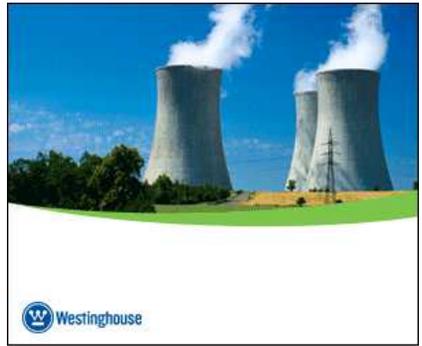
The native Georgian joined the center after responding to a blurb for volunteer help posted in the Sandy Springs Neighbor.

She encourages others to join the volunteer ranks.

"Sometimes it's hard to get motivated to go, but when you're there — and a lot of the volunteers feel that way — it's very, very rewarding," said Hinson. "It's like their lives are so busy and sometimes it seems like it's so difficult to carve out that time, but once they're there they feel like they're making such a huge difference in people's lives."

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**Celeste Lenth** | March 27, 2014

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