

Woman's game for teens helps her land dream job

By [CHRISTOPHER QUINN](#)
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Published on: 07/19/07

Mechel Glass had a tough decision to make.

After getting walking papers in a 2005 corporate layoff, the single mother could dive back into the corporate world.



Allen Sullivan/Special
(ENLARGE)

Mechel Glass' board game, titled 'Beat Debt,' rewards players for paying off the credit card debt they are given as the game starts.



Allen Sullivan/Special
(ENLARGE)

Mechel Glass sold the rights to her game to Consumer Credit Counseling Service.

get a business plan in place.

Gary Roberts, a professor of entrepreneurship at the Coles College of Business at KSU, teaches budgeting to Edge Connection students and involves his KSU students as tutors.

"I will never tell any student that an idea is not any good," Roberts said,

But after writing budget and business plans and having them reviewed, some students discover the "numbers won't work," he said.

But he and other teachers are proud of the numbers of students who succeed.

A spokeswoman said 546 businesses have been started by Edge Connection students. Some of them are small, extra-income home businesses. Others are successes that keep their founders working full time, as was the case with Shundra London-Owens. She was a seamstress who started a company that expanded into embroidery, drapes and reupholstering furniture for hotels.

Or, she could take the risk she had considered for more than a year.

Her dream was to teach teenagers how to manage finances with the help of a board game she was developing. Starting a business rather than job hunting might not fit the game's teaching scenario of making conservative decisions.

"But I think everything happens for a reason," the Fayetteville resident said.

After her layoff as a project manager for the Lenovo computer company, she had the time.

She had taken training in micro-enterprise from the Edge Connection at Kennesaw State University.

It is a nonprofit organization started eight years ago. Volunteer professors, lawyers, marketers and business people teach mostly low- and moderate-income people how to start home-based businesses.

In recent years, it has drawn new clients — early retirees and people stranded by layoffs who think they have a better idea, said director Patricia Harris.

People like Glass.

"I thought I could make a lot of money doing this," she said.

So she stepped out on her raft of enthusiasm to see whether it would float.

Glass had done everything right leading up to this. After high school in Fayetteville, she joined the Army because it would pay for college. She served three years, including time in Turkey.

Upon her discharge, she majored in international affairs with a minor in international business at Kennesaw State. She graduated in 1998 and landed a job with a division of IBM that was later bought out by Lenovo.

At the same time, she began talking to friends' children, youth and school groups about securing their financial futures.

"You know how kids say, 'This is boring' " Glass said. "That's when I started thinking about a game."

She heard about and decided to take the 12-week evening course to help her

Glass continued teaching teen financial seminars while devising her board game. She used her severance pay to get it made and began hawking it at her seminars.

Players start with various incomes and \$5,000 in credit card debt. As they travel around the game, they land on squares where they face lifelike situations, risks and temptations. One might end up paying \$500 for plumbing repairs, have a chance to invest in real estate and build wealth, or spend money on vacation. The winner is the first one to pay off the credit card.

Atlanta's Consumer Credit Counseling Service found out about Glass' work and her game. It seemed a perfect match with their own work. They began using Glass as a consultant last year. They hired her full time last May to teach and develop online courses.

"This is like a dream," she said. "It gave me the opportunity to do something I love."

Consumer Credit Counseling Service also bought the rights to her game, to use in their course for consumers.

Glass declined to reveal how much she sold the game's rights for, but her smile says that she beat debt.