

Ceal Sommer, Woman of the Year 1998

"Nobody has the right to sit down and do nothing"

Ceal Sommer exemplifies many facets of AAUW's program and ideals pursuing advanced degrees, a career in scientific research, lifelong education and continuing contributions to the community. In 1934, before it was popular for girls to pursue careers in math and science, she received a B.A. from Hunter College with a major in pre-med. After that, she earned her M.A. from Columbia in bio-chemistry. As one of the earliest registered medical technicians in New York, she worked on many research projects, including breast cancer and the Rh factor. She taught at the St. Francis School of Nursing, 1940-1944. At that time she was a member of our branch; later she became a member-at-large when she returned to New York City in 1979.

She retired four years ago. However, in 1993 she began working with Astor Headstart teaching English as a Second Language to Spanish-speaking parents. In addition, she also teaches a citizenship class at Astor. She is a volunteer with Dutchess Outreach. Active with Temple Beth-El, Poughkeepsie, she has also served on the board of Jewish Family visiting service at the Jewish Community Center. She currently volunteers Mondays at Overlook School in their Grandmothers' Storytelling program. She was 84 years old.