

When it comes to special computer projects, Tyler Police Department volunteer Bob Lamonte is the man to call. In April 2007, Bob was asked to look at the department's ArcGIS software package and see if he can sort out how to create accurate maps of the city that depict the location of calls for service.

Bob, who just celebrated his 78th birthday in late May, is no stranger to computers and software. He spent the majority of his working life putting men into space and on the moon as a NASA engineer working on the Gemini and Apollo programs.

So Bob got the software manual and took it home with him to study. After a few days, he came back to the office and asked if there was a computer he could use to work on the program. We set him up in our statistician's office and turned him loose.

Over the course of a year, Bob took it upon himself to work with the city's GIS mapping department, the IT folks and our department's computer experts. He not only taught himself how to create the maps, complete with color coded points and text with case numbers and type of call, but he wrote a set of simple instructions that now allows our statistician and various supervisors to generate maps with information specific to their needs.

He has progressed to the next step – getting real time mapping capabilities for officers to pull up in their patrol cars. This will enable the officers to get a good idea of what sort of crimes are going on in their beats that year, that month, that week, that day, right down to that minute.

As part of his work on the GIS mapping project, he has branched out into mapping up-to-date sex offender data and other functions. Soon, Bob's work will also become a part of the department's web site so citizens can call up the same info at home.

So far Bob has donated 725 hours of his time in the last year to seeing this project is done and done right. When completed, the whole thing will be, like Bob, priceless.