

EDUCATION

William E. Gary creates new horizons for black students

People Who Made A Difference is an annual program sponsored by The Courier-News to recognize individuals working to improve their communities. Nominations are solicited through in-paper coupons and developed through staff research. Winners are selected by editors of The Courier-News.

By **BARBARA BOWERS**
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PLAINFIELD — As a young black man in a fatherless household, William E. Gary managed to make it

through adolescence unscathed.

But many of his contemporaries weren't as fortunate.

He gives much of the credit for his survival and, ultimately, his success, to the guidance he received from several men he respected, including a retired Army veteran who was his Boy Scout leader and a school custodian who helped Gary attend summer camps far from the city's streets.

In return, Gary has played mentor and father figure, himself, to hundreds of area black students who have joined the New Horizons College Club. Driven by a need to help people, Gary launched the club in 1970 just a

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Third of a seven-part series

few years after his own graduation from college. His goal was to inspire minority teen-agers to go on to higher education and improve their lives.

The club "is a place where young minority students can get help," Gary said. "That's my legacy: giving some-

thing back."

For his efforts to improve the educational opportunities for minority students, Gary has been named The Courier-News' Person Who Made A Difference in Education for 1993.

More than 1,100 minority students have gotten help in hurdling financial obstacles and wading through paperwork to gain admission to colleges. With Gary's expertise as a guidance counselor, club members have received more than \$1.5 million in scholarships and financial aid.

Lacked motivation at first

It's the kind of club Gary could

have used as a youth.

"I didn't get motivated in high school," he said, "and counselors didn't encourage young African-American males to go off to college unless they were exceptional."

As a high school student in the early '60s, he didn't think his education could extend to college. But one day, on a city basketball court, an older male friend encouraged him. He took the advice to heart and eventually

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