

## STUDENT AID

# FAME builds community leaders through scholarship

By Chuck Gibson

Staff writer

Underprivileged African-American children in Pittsburgh have a better chance to become leaders in their community thanks to one Pittsburgh-based group.

The Fund for the Advancement of Minorities through Education (FAME) has been helping students receive scholarships to five area private schools — Sewickley Academy, Shadyside Academy, Ellis School, Winchester-Thurston and St. Edmund's Academy.

Sewickley's Ron Gebhardt, former chairman of the board and current board member, first conceived of the idea for Pittsburgh in 1990 after hearing a presentation from a Cincinnati group that was granting scholarships to six different schools. Their goal was to increase the pool of African-



**FIRST MEETING** for Arthur Woods as president of FAME. Those pictured are (standing, from left) Woods; Ruthie King and Ron Gebhardt, past presidents; and Carol Mullaugh, treasurer. Seated is Lisa Baldwin-Youngblood, FAME executive director.

American leaders in the city.

"After that, I spent a year talking to the black community, corporations and other foundations," said Gebhardt. "There was universal support for the program."

The program grants a \$5,000 scholarship to needy students for their education with the schools paying the majority of the balance. Families contribute to expenses as they can based on their own ability to pay.

Fund-raising began in 1993. A \$1 million donation challenge grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation began the process.

FAME granted its first scholarships in 1994. This year, there are 44 students throughout the five participating schools.

FAME's goal is to have 50 students for next year. For most, their education does not

stop once they finish with the program.

"There are 14 students already graduated and in college," Gebhardt said. "The first is slated to graduate in June 2003."

After 10 years of spearheading the program, Gebhardt will hand over leadership to Art Woods, a Cranberry resident and employee of USX. Woods' first meeting as president was Dec. 4.

He has been with USX for 14 years and is married. The couple has two sons, the youngest is a sophomore at Sewickley Academy, while the oldest has graduated from the academy and is a freshman at Drexel University.

Woods says helping students through independent schools is not the only goal of FAME.

"We're looking to partner

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# Education is direct road to FAME

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with companies that will grant internships in the area," he said.

Woods believes it's not only a FAME task to help develop future leaders for Pittsburgh.

"It's a city task, too," he said. "There should also be a solid educational system starting in elementary school that will help lure students back to the city."

Woods emphasized that entrance requirements must be met for participating schools to be considered for a

scholarship.

"We're the second wave after students are admitted," he said "If a school has someone who thinks they can compete, why not help them?"

Woods, a graduate of Brashear High School in Pittsburgh, earned a bachelor's degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a master's degree from Pitt.

He is working toward a doctoral degree from Robert Morris University.

"The purpose of education is to open up doors and give yourself an opportunity, and that's

why I'm working with FAME," Woods said. "The more education someone has, the better."

According to Woods, one of the benefits of the FAME program is the increase in diversity at the participating schools.

"Once the students enter school, they can all focus on just being friends," he said.

Diversity allows kids to prepare for life outside their own worlds, he said.

"I'm pleased with independent education," Woods said. "That's why I'm doing this, so kids can reach their potential and be the best they can be."