

YOUR SUNDAY

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Harrisburg University junior Ashley Green, 20, left, is majoring in integrative science with a biology concentration. Her former mentor, Ama Appiah, 30, a consultant with Deloitte Consulting in Camp Hill, helped Green with academic challenges. More about Green on C5.

PHOTOS BY DAN GLEITER, The Patriot-News

One generation inspires the next

BY DIANA FISHLOCK, dfishlock@patriot-news.com

Back in the day, a kid in Harrisburg's housing projects couldn't get away with much. In fact, before the kid got home, his parents would know what he had done, said Robert "Moe" McKinney Jr., 64, of Lower Paxton Twp. Older men mentored them, took them aside if they started making bad choices, sat them down and told them how they should live.

They, in turn, mentored other men: young men considering college, married men wanting to repair their marriages, unemployed men who needed to switch fields, even former prisoners needing to start a new life.

For them, mentoring has been a way of life. Moving to Harrisburg's projects changed his life, McKinney said. "It was the best thing that ever happened to me, the opportunity to be mentored by everybody."

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. mentored a whole generation.

"King is the universal mentor," said William "Pete" Washington, 62, of Harrisburg, another of the group of friends who grew up together. "He laid the tenets for service, period, whether it be political, community, religious, whatever."

King mentored by setting an example for all of us, in his civil rights marching, protesting, challenging what he felt was illegal, Washington said.

"He set the bar. Many of his disciplines ... are still out there serving," Washington said. "His mentorship is alive today. It lives within my soul, and within many people's souls."

King served as an example for an entire generation that didn't have a mentor, said Eric Darr, executive vice president and provost at Harrisburg University.

"In some sense he touched an entire generation, multiple generations," said Darr, a psychologist who led mentoring programs for Domino's Pizza and Ford Motor Co. Countless people could relate to him.

"A good mentor can make a huge difference in a person's life. You often hear people in a leadership position or management say, 'I'm here because of a mentor. I'm successful because of a mentor,'" Darr said.

Mentors can help people break down barriers and see their options, to better understand a boss or pro-

HOW TO HELP

The Mentoring Partnership of Central Pennsylvania is seeking 500 mentors for students K-12. The partnership will officially launch at a Mentoring on the Move event from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday at Strawberry Square, Third and Walnut streets, Harrisburg. The organization brings together more than 25 mentoring organizations. For more information, call 732-0700.

fessor or office politics or ethics. They serve as a more experienced, nonjudgmental guide through a career or college or life in general.

Ideally, a mentoring relationship lasts for years, Darr said.

"The mentor can watch a person grow and learn over time. They can help at each stage along the way. The relationship can take many forms over a period of years. You can provide more thoughts and ideas the more you've known somebody."

Sometimes a mentor is the perfect person to help with a thorny ethical issue because unlike a boss he's not in a position of authority and doesn't have a vested interest in the outcome, Darr said. "A mentor can say, 'I've cut myself on this sharp edge before, and here's why you might want to avoid it.'"

Washington now sometimes finds himself mentored by younger men he helped years ago.

Marvin Speaks, 66, said he could probably name 20 guys who mentored him in football and in his family and neighborhood.

"If somebody saw somebody doing something wrong, they would talk to you like they'd talk to their own children," said Herbert McArthur, 66, of Harrisburg.

Many black men from their generation were mentored by Ezell Jones, 81, who coached midget baseball and played on the Harrisburg Giants baseball team.

Sports often brought men of different ages into contact: midget baseball, summer basketball, high school football. The smaller, less athletic guys, like Washington, worked as water boys or other support, but the older, athletic men, mentored them, too.

"I've helped a lot of people over the years," Jones



"PETE" WASHINGTON



MARVIN SPEAKS



GARY ROSS



*"I give them respect.
They give me respect."*

— Ezell Jones, retired construction worker



EZELL JONES

MENTOR

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said. "I had a lot of contact with a lot of young kids. I always had good relationships with kids. They're grown now with kids."

Jones remembers kidding Washington a lot. "And then we'd get serious. We'd sit down and talk about things, the direction he was going as a young man. I just had conversations with him."

The group of friends still reveres him, still referring to him as "Mr. Jones" 50 years later.

In contrast, the young black men growing up in Harrisburg today call their elders "Old Head," the men said.

"Young folks don't have any respect for their elders anymore," Washington said. "They don't have any respect for themselves."

Adults can't correct other people's children the way they used to, the men said. It's not accepted.

In the old neighborhood, the kids constantly competed against each other, but they helped each other, too.

"We shared everything from candy to what was going on with each other," McKinney said.

"I didn't realize I was helping him," McKinney said, gesturing toward Washington. "We just talked. We just talked about anything and everything."

On a more formal basis, with mentors and students assigned to one another, Harrisburg University probably has fostered close to 300 mentoring relationships, Darr said.

"Students often come from circumstances, homes, where they don't have role models," Darr said. "They don't have parents or grandparents or neighbors who have worked in a science and technology field."

The university tries to connect mentors with students who have a similar background, he said. "So students can say 'Hey, if he can do it, I can do it.'"