

Second To None

By Arnold T. Blumberg, English '93

As the city's executive vice president of the Baltimore Community Development Financing Corporation, **Gary M. Brooks**, history '79, is devoted to helping Baltimore area youth and is a recognized expert in neighborhood and community development. For these and numerous other volunteer efforts, Brooks was recognized with this year's UMBC Community Leadership Award.

"What I value the most in community service is interacting with youth," says Brooks. This passion led to his work with the Madison Square Buccaneers Inner-City Program, which he cofounded in 1996. Serving as vice president and a coach of several teams, Brooks guides urban youth, ages 6 to 14, in academics and basketball, teaching them to "use basketball as a tool to succeed in life and not let basketball use them." He credits UMBC for furthering his interest in these activities, saying that it "played a critical role in preparing me for community service, both from a professional and volunteer standpoint."

Today, Brooks is clearly impressed with the campus and its current students. As an active alumnus, he regularly returns to his alma mater and has witnessed some major changes since his undergraduate days. "The growth has been phenomenal," says Brooks. "When I was here, I lived on campus, and there were only three dormitories. I think this physical development is unparalleled by probably any other university in the state."

Brooks credits much of this success to President **Freeman Hrabowski's** leadership, but there's no denying that he, too, has assumed a substantial leadership role in the community. Brooks passion for energizing the youth of Baltimore to seek out and find the value in higher education is what drives him.

"I see a very strong value and correlation between UMBC's strategy and students being successful in business and community service," says Brooks. "UMBC's strategy of developing an entrepreneurial approach early in students' careers is what helps them not only to succeed but to excel." It is a connection that he is eager to help facilitate. "I'd like to act as a bridge and share the resources of UMBC with the youth of Baltimore City, to introduce them to higher education before they become college age and help them to recognize the value of education in practical day-to-day involvement." For Brooks, UMBC's role in providing this support and guidance is exemplary. "UMBC is something of a flagship institution. It's second to none as far as I'm concerned."

Arnold T. Blumberg is a freelance writer, book designer and columnist. He currently teaches at UMBC and is president of the English Alumni Society.