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Siblings Keep Mom's Values Alive

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PLANT CITY - Throughout her life, family and friends said, Elouise Rice Robinson was a stellar example of motherhood, citizenry and virtue. When the Plant City native died March 12, 1978, at 39 as a result of complications of high blood pressure, she left her four children, her neighborhood and Plant City with one less role model. To help graduating seniors reach their goals after high school and instill some of their mother's determination and values, Robinson's children, all born and raised in Plant City, established the Elouise Rice Robinson Scholarship in 2005. Recently, seven Plant City High School seniors were awarded part of the \$6,000 scholarship during an awards banquet. To fund the scholarships, the Robinson siblings - Hazel Robinson of Fort Washington, Md.; Derriel Robinson of District Heights, Md.; Regina Smith of Upper Marlboro, Md.; and Debra Sanders of Philadelphia - have dug into their pockets to award \$11,000 to worthy students. Standing in the South Florida Baptist Hospital's community conference room before the two-hour April 27 ceremony, Hazel Robinson said \$3,000 was awarded in 2005 and \$2,000 was given out in 2006. Last year, the scholarship was suspended while she served a tour of duty in Kuwait with the Army Reserves. This year, Danielle McIntyre won the \$1,500 for the first-place scholarship. Tanay Tatum received \$1,000 for second place, and Roderick Henderson \$750 for third. For honorable mention, \$500 each was given out in different categories to Michael Sykes for leadership, Willie Haynes for community service and Katrina McCants and Channing Woodall for entrepreneurship. "We decided to up the ante this year," said Hazel Robinson, a 1975 Plant City high graduate. "We just pulled our resources together. We do this hopefully to help make a difference in their young lives." Robinson said the scholarship is awarded to black Plant City High School seniors with a 3.0 grade-point average or better who show exceptional community service, leadership and solid plans for college. For the first time, applicants had to write essays about their career goals, scholarship use, African-American role models or leaders, a religious influence or how they would give back to their high school. Speaking to the audience of about 40 family members and friends, Sherrie Mueller, Plant City high's guidance resource specialist, said the Robinson scholarship is part of between \$4 million and \$5 million in scholarships given to the school's 479 seniors this year. She said the awards are a living tribute to Robinson and her children's interest in the welfare of their hometown. "I want to encourage them and to keep in mind this family has remembered their roots," she said. "I don't want you to ever forget where you came from. I just think what the Robinsons do in memory of their mother is such a unique, special idea." After a dinner of fried chicken, potatoes, salad, collard greens and chocolate cake catered by the hospital, the scholarship winners talked about the importance of the financial assistance with their future educations. "This is very helpful, and I appreciate it very much. Paying for college is tough," said Woodall, who plans to use his \$500 to help pay for a business management degree from Limestone College in South Carolina. "It's very heroic on their parts to do this. It makes you want to give back in return." Elouise Rice Robinson Scholarship Winners First place: \$1,500, Danielle McIntyre, 18, 6.67 grade-point average; valedictorian; National Honor Society president and senior class vice president. College:

University of the South. Second place: \$1,000, Tanay Tatum, 18, 5.56 GPA; National Honor Society, basketball and golf. College: University of Florida. Third place: \$750, Roderick Henderson, 18, 4.22 GPA; National Honor Society and basketball. College: University of Central Florida, architecture. Honorable mentions: \$500 • Michael Sykes, 18, 3.81 GPA. College: University of Tampa, criminal justice. • Willie Haynes, 18, 3.5 GPA. College: Florida A&M University, computer engineering. • Katrina McCants, 18, 3.2 GPA, dermatology school. • Channing Woodall, 17, 2.9 GPA. College: Limestone College, Gaffney, S.C., marketing and business management.