

## URBAN CORPS WORKER

# Student Helps Others ---People He Cannot See

By DAVID MASSEY

Gary Wood is a college student spending his summer months working for Urban Corps, a citywide program designed to involve young people in the social and political life of the city.

Gary, 23, works with the Rent-a-Kid project receiving job orders from potential employers of the 2,000 youngsters in the program.

Like most college students who devote their vacation time to helping other people, Wood finds his work "very fulfilling and rewarding." But unlike most students, Gary cannot see the people he helps—he is totally blind.

While a senior at Russell High School in East Point, where he lives, Gary underwent seven operations to remove three tumors behind his eyes. Caused by a rare eye disease, the tumors were successfully destroyed.

However, the healing of the scar tissue caused the retinas to become detached and covered, resulting in total blindness.

Wood says he went through "a traumatic experience" following his blindness. He found it "a time of evaluation and appraisal" when he had his first deeply religious encounter.

"My experience with Christ was the time when I began to reach for greater heights," he said in a soft voice.

After graduation from high school, Wood attended special schools for the blind in Alabama and in Atlanta where he learned how to read Braille.

He then attended Truett McConnell Junior College in Cleveland, Ga. He received an Associate in Arts degree last winter quarter.

While there, he was president



Staff Photo—Marion Crowe

### GARY WOOD FINDS JOB 'FULFILLING, REWARDING' Blind College Student Works for Urban Corps

of the freshman class and was elected to Who's Who in American Junior College. In addition to other activities, he was a member of Phi Theta Kappa, an honorary scholastic society.

Gary met his wife Carrol in junior college. They were married after 16 months. Mrs. Wood, who is not blind, is em-

ployed at the South Fulton Neighborhood Service Center.

GARY HAS A "sense of wanting to be complete and effective in what I do." Despite his blindness he wants to be an independent person.

"Being blind makes me want to be more independent and to be a positive influence," he said.

"My goal is to know myself and the only way to know myself is to know others, to identify with them and try to relate to them," he commented.

Mr. and Mrs. Wood will both attend Mercer University in the fall where she will work toward a degree in social studies.

He plans to major in psychology and hopes to go on to graduate school. He likes counseling and guidance work and looks forward to the day when he will have his own private practice as a psychologist.