

UB Black Union Gives Free Meals

By HARLAN ABBEY

ONE REASON some pupils in inner-city schools can't concentrate on their lessons is that they are hungry, educational studies have shown.

University of Buffalo's Black Students Union is erasing this problem for about 130 pupils a day through its free breakfast program each morning in Westminster House, 421 Monroe St.

THE PROGRAM is financed through a \$3,500 grant by the UB Student Assn. It began three weeks ago and the initial grant is down to about \$1,500. Community and civic response has been slow, but, says Mrs. Karen Asbury, 21, of 437 Humboldt Pky., a senior majoring in history:

"We're going to keep this going through sheer determination; we'll find the funds some way."

The BSU has some 1,000 members, and about 10 to 20 participate in serving breakfast each day.

"THE FIRST of us get here at 6:15 a.m.," explained Charles Rasheim, 19, a freshman majoring in Black Studies. He continued:

"The girls do most of the cooking, while the men do most of the heavy work. We start serving children in kindergarten through Grade 6 around 8 a.m. and stop at 8:50 so they can get to school on time. From 9 to 9:45 a.m. we serve the children in the nursery school here in Westminster House."

The breakfasts served are well-planned and hearty. Thursday's menu consisted of scrambled eggs, grits, bacon, milk, fruit juice, toast and jelly.

"WE DON'T CHECK on

whether the children ate at home and are coming here for 'seconds,' we don't turn anyone away," added Mrs. Asbury.

She said the students allot 70 cents per day per child, and usually serve 130 children a day. One day, 192 breakfasts were served. Shopping is done over the weekend.

"We do most of our purchasing through 'Echo,' a black co-operative program, because we have learned that most food stores in black areas overcharge their customers," she added, continuing:

"WE PLAN to expand this program to a second location in January, and we'd also like to begin consumer education courses based on what we've learned through shopping for food for the program."

Another positive result of the program, Rasheim said, is "the growth of valuable relationships between young children and students." He said he did not believe the youngsters know the older students attend college, so there is probably not much emphasis on education.

"But I think it helps any young child to have an older friend to listen to his problems and to give him advice," he said.

SO FAR, Mrs. Georgia Cooper of 311 Madison Ave. is the only adult helping the UB students in their early morning project.

"I brought my grandchildren in one morning and I felt these young people needed help, so I've been helping ever since," she said.

"Now we are seeking help in the areas of donations of food and financial donations," Mrs. Asbury said.