

# JCCC Alumnus of the Year

The Johnson County Community College Alumni Association has named Gary O. Seabaugh of Leawood, director of the Plaza Academy, as the first Alumnus of the Year.

Seabaugh, who has been director of the academy since it opened in 1978, was a member of the first graduating class at JCCC.

"It was a wonderful place to be," said Seabaugh, who had just returned from Marine duty in Vietnam. "They had a lot of compassion for returning vets. The interest the faculty and administration took in returning veterans, especially combat, was

very important to the mental and emotional well-being of the students. They were very interested in their students' well-being in general."

Seabaugh, whose family lived in Prairie Village at the time, said the college had just opened and was the only thing he could afford.

He earned an associate of arts degree at JCCC and later earned bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He also earned a doctorate in developmental and child psychology from the University of Kansas.

The Plaza Academy, 32 E. 46th St., is a private accredited high school that meets the academic and emotional needs of teenagers who are not served in the traditional public school system.

"The academy serves the gifted and talented, students with learning difficulties or students who are developmentally advanced and have outgrown the traditional school system," Seabaugh said.

The average enrollment is 70 students, more than half of whom are from Johnson County. More than 70 percent of the graduates con-

tinue their educations at community colleges and universities.

"I send lots of my graduates to Johnson County Community College," said Seabaugh, who occasionally serves as a lecturer at the college.

JCCC served as a foundation for the rest of his academic and professional career, Seabaugh said.

"Had I not had that understanding and compassion from my teachers at JCCC, I never would have made it. In 1969, Vietnam veterans were not very popular. It was like a different world at JCCC. There was none of that

prejudicial attitude."

Seabaugh, 42, was chosen as the Alumnus of the Year for his "dedication to education and for the work he is doing with kids that have not been turned on by education," said Vivian Wilkerson, president of the JCCC Alumni Association.

The association also is naming a group of honorary alumni — the first board of trustees. They include Wilbur T. Billington, Maxine B. Allen, Ellen B. Laner, John H. Robinson, O. Dale Smith, Hugh Speer and Virginia Krebs, a current JCCC board member.