



PHOTOS BY DENNIS WALL/ORLANDO SENTINEL

George Tinsley visits one of his Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise operations in Auburndale, where his business success is as great as his basketball prowess.

## Setting up the rebound

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Sometimes when tooling around Winter Haven, George Tinsley passes a playground where lanky lads sprint across the basketball court chasing hoop dreams.

He can imagine the talk in the paint; he knows it's similar to his boyhood days on the Louisville, Ky., courts in the 1960s: talk about hitting the big-time. Talk about becoming the next Oscar Robertson — or Tracy McGrady. Debate about which playground wannabe is the baddest ever to lace up Nikes.

In the mid-'60s on those Kentucky courts, you could settle the question with one name: George Tinsley. Abandoned as a baby and raised in poverty, he did what so



An American Basketball Association reunion ball is testimony to glory days. That era is rivaled only by Tinsley's business success.

many poor kids only dream of, leaping from playground idol to the pros, barnstorming with the old American Basketball Association.

After his college stardom dimmed into a journeyman career, he saw that even dreams that seem as solid as hardwood courts can warp.

Unless — as Tinsley tells kids who'll listen — you have an education and solid options as a backup.

As president and owner of several enterprises, including PenGeo Inc., which operates his Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets in Florida, Tinsley's new game involves managing top-grossing restaurants and helping kids beat the streets through mentoring.

His Auburndale restaurant has become a finishing school of sorts,