

The Community Actioneer

GARRETT COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION

Written by and for our Employees

Message from the Chairman

By Glenn Tolbert

You may have seen him walking our halls and not known who he is. A loping, lanky figure, exuding both confidence and a gentle kindness, he is Lowell Bender. Despite being soft spoken, when Lowell speaks people listen. That's because in addition to his quiet intelligence, Lowell has served as Chairman of Community Action's Board of Directors for 10 years. "I was selected by the GC Board of Commissioners to represent the elected officials", he says in his humble manner. The board plans, coordinates, evaluates and administers programs directed toward the elimination of poverty and the enabling of low income families and individuals of all ages, in rural and urban areas within Garrett County, to attain the skills, knowledge, motivation and opportunity to become more fully self-sufficient.

Students at Garrett College, where he serves as Dean of Continuing Education, appreciate Bender's understated qualities. He's worked at the school for 35 years. Before becoming one of the top administrators at Garrett College, he served as the Director of Community Development at

Community Action from 1967 to 1972. "We were starting a lot of programs back then, one example is Head Start", he recalls. "The agency started in 1965. The first full year Head Start began in Jennings in 1967. Head start was originally an eight week summer program. We had five target areas in the county that were noted as low-income: Finzel/Avilton, Jennings, Kitzmiller, Crellin and Friendsville," he said. Bender describes Community Action's highest priority as efficiently operating our departments including Early Childhood Development, Community & Emergency Services, Area Agency on Aging, Housing Services, and Transportation to serve Garrett County residents. He added "we are close to wrapping up the Strategic Plan process", whose purpose is "to examine our mission, values and beliefs, strengths and areas for improvement". Staff and board members have met with external stakeholders to look at trends impacting the county and opportunities for growth and change.

"Community Action has reached a level of maturity over the years and these programs have much more sophistication. The agency has more influence – when we first started



Lowell Bender

out, there were people in the community who were very much opposed to the agency, they saw us as a "hand-out agency". The public's support for the agency, as well as from elected officials has changed radically, we are not just accepted, we are respected", said Bender.

Some of the programs that Bender is most proud of include the efforts to provide as much affordable housing as possible. "We are increasing our efforts including River Hill in Oakland and Lake Hill in McHenry. We've always been aggressive in what we've been doing in the housing market over the years, to make more affordable housing available. We still want to have affordable housing for all county residents."

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Head Start and Early Head Start—A Brief History

Head Start began as part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 authorized programs to help meet the needs of disadvantaged preschool children.

The Office of Economic Opportunity launched Project Head Start, a program for children age 3 to 5 as an eight-week summer program in 1965. The project was designed to help end poverty by providing preschool children from low-income families with a program that would meet emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs.

Today Head Start is a program within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the HHS. In 1995, the Early Head Start program was established to serve children from birth to three years of age in recognition of the mounting evidence that the earliest years matter a great deal to children's growth and development. Programs are administered locally by nonprofit organizations and local school systems.

[Source: Wikipedia]



Photo: Glenn Tolbert

Head Start at Community Action

Our Early Childhood Educational Programs are designed for prenatal moms and from birth to 5 years old—and they are Free! We have 12 centers throughout the county offering home-based options, family support for pre-K children, family child care option and Wrap Around Child Care.

Head Start's educational goal is to increase the child's ability to think, reason, and speak clearly. Head Start assists children in developing self-confidence, self-

expression and self-help skills.

Head Start is designed to meet each child's educational needs. It also aims to meet the educational needs of Head Start families.

Head Start provides all children with a comprehensive health care program including medical, dental, mental health, and nutritional services. Children are served meals and snacks that meet at least two-thirds of their daily nutritional needs.

Parents are the most important influence in a child's development. Parents are encouraged to be active participants in Head Start.

Families are assisted in assessing their needs and given guidance in meeting those needs.

Children with disabilities and their families receive a full range of services including training, evaluation and therapy at the centers.



What Makes a Good Teacher?



Kimberly Crosco (front) and Amber Cline (rear) escort Head Start children to an outdoor activity.

A good teacher is someone who teaches not only with his mind, but also with his heart. She teaches her students that it's ok to make mistakes; she is respectful of the student. A good teacher

blends real life experiences with text book material and is an effective communicator. He engages students, makes learning fun. He is curious, passion-

ate about teaching, and excited to see a student grasping a difficult concept. A good teacher must be creative and imaginative, she knows there are many ways to teach a child, and should be flexible enough to change her teaching techniques. A good teacher allows students to ask questions, she draws on her students' learning experiences. A good teacher establishes classroom rules and procedures which help students know what is expected from them. A teacher is a role

model; he encourages cooperation and sets an example for other students. He encourages good performance. He works with the parents to help the child to grow and learn. A good teacher can relate to her students on their level, she makes the kids look forward to entering the classroom, she builds their self esteem. A good teacher is patient, she's the one with a big heart. A good teacher ensures the child becomes a productive member of society.



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One Hundred Years from Now

One hundred years from now
It will not matter
what kind of car I drove,
What kind of house I lived in,
how much money was in my bank account
nor what my clothes looked like.
But the world may be a better place because
I was important in the life of a child.

(excerpt from "Within My Power" by Forest Witcraft)



On The Horizon...Lake Hill Affordable Homes

Community Action is working with partners to build homes that will create new opportunities for Garrett County workers to buy affordable homes. The development known as Lake Hill will be located in McHenry near the college and the airport allowing employees to live near their place of employment.

This development is the result of efforts by the County Commissioners, the Economic Development Corporation, and Garrett County's Department of Economic Development, said Duane Yoder, President. It will be the biggest effort in our history to ensure that persons who work in the county can afford to buy homes, Yoder stated. We hope that it will result in over 200 new affordable housing units.

The development has garnered some opposition, primarily from Delegate Wendell Beitzel, who is questioning its proximity to the airport and the appropriateness of developing a site near Deep Creek Lake that is not developed. This is a bad argument, explained Yoder, noting the development is almost a half mile from the airport and all federal and local safety and use regulations have been met regarding developing a residential community near an airport. The site is next to a business park being developed by the county and will provide housing for workers who are employed around Deep Creek Lake and at the business park. The McHenry community is



seeing the fastest growth of jobs in Garrett County and this is an ideal situation to make sure that they can afford housing close to where they work, Yoder said. It will also enable Garrett County residents working around the Lake to enjoy some of the amenities mostly available to visitors.



Cherie Ross, Vice President for Development, and the person directly responsible for planning and finding funds to develop Lake Hill, noted that Garrett County has a reputation for working together to accomplish goals. Building homes in Garrett County that working families can afford requires cooperation and partnership among government, private builders and lenders, and nonprofit organizations, she stated. This is a great demonstration of how teamwork can be used to create housing in an area where jobs and business are being located.

Even as unemployment in Garrett County drops, the cost of housing has made it very difficult for young working families to acquire a home and increasingly hard for middle-

income persons in a market where the median home sale far exceeds affordability ratios of median county household incomes. Existing employers seeking to expand or recruit employees and new businesses considering moving to the county are expressing concern over housing affordability for their workers.

The plan is to utilize 40-50 acres to build 200 homes, Ross

of prices targeted to different incomes of buyers. The county will transfer land to a nonprofit land trust that will hold title to the land and provide land lease agreements with buyers. The cost of the land is removed from the price of the house, making the home affordable to low- and moderate-income purchasers. Revenue from the sales of homes will go to the Trust to rehabilitate or develop housing in other parts of the



Architectural drawings: Devlin Architecture

said. Approximately 200 acres will be placed in a conservancy with a permanent development ban and as a buffer around the airport.

There will be a mix of house types and price points, Ross explained. The primary market is buyers below 150% of the area median income (currently \$60,000). House types and sizes will vary to create a range

county. Only persons below 150% of the median county income will be eligible for reduced prices. Higher income buyers will pay the full appraised market value.

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By Susanne Beeman

Kudos to the following employees celebrating an anniversary in September for their years of service with Community Action. Thank you for your dedication to those you serve!

Jenny Beitzel, AAA, 2 years

Amanda Compton, Head Start, 2 years

Robert Dixon, Transportation, 2 years

Judy Fike, Head Start, 7 years

Rhonda Finch, Head Start, 8 years

Lois Ford, AAA, 2 years

David Gilbert, Transportation, 1 year

Tanya Jacques, Head Start, 1 year

Kathy Lilly, Head Start, 13 years

Kim Lowery, Head Start, 7 years

Deb McCroskey, Head Start, 14 years

Sharon Reams, AAA, 2 years

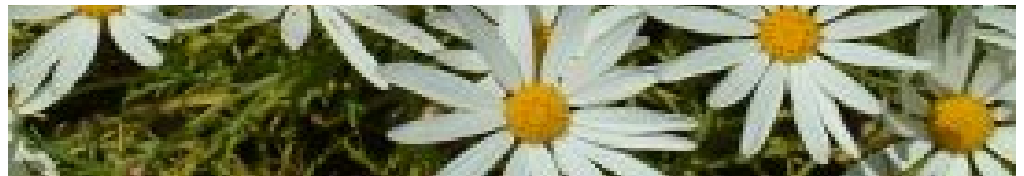
Kathy Reel, Head Start, 17 years

Sharon Rinker, Head Start, 16 years

Darlene Schmidt, Head Start, 19 years

Kathleen Welch, Head Start, 6 years

Mary Yoder, AAA, 2 years



**GARRETT COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION
BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITY,
EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS**

GTS News

By Marguerite Hayhurst

Pam Nelson, VP for Community Services & Family Development announced the Maryland Transportation Administration awarded GTS \$590,540 to build 4 bus shelters in the GTS facility parking lot. The main purpose of the shelters is to keep the busses in a secure location and out of the elements, such as snow.

John Hill, Transportation Director, said the two-sided structures with a roof will enable busses to drive through the shelter after warming up. Construction is underway.

Message from the Chairman (continued)

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Like any other organization, Community Action is feeling the effects of today's economy. Bender is closely watching how more and more county residents are applying for energy assistance through Community Action.

As for the present situation, Bender says he would like to see a continuation of the mission to improve the quality of life for the community's residents.

"We have looked into the future and think we are on the right track, he says. We may decide to put more effort into programs like affordable housing," says. "but we will not make any major changes in how we do things now," he said.

Welcome!

We extend a warm welcome
to our newest employees!

- Debra Bennett, Transportation
- Karen Durst, Head Start
- Stephanie Hershman, Head Start
- Melissa Johnson, Transportation
- Richard Wildesen, Jr., AAA
- Elisabeth Wood, Head Start