

Federal grant allows Garrett Head Start program to expand

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OAKLAND — Garrett County Community Action Committee recently received a \$818,182 grant from the Department of Health and Human Services to expand the Head Start program in the county.

"This grant is really important. It's important for the children and the families," said Duane Yoder, community action committee president. "It will give us the option of working directly with the child care provider to reach more children, families and parents.

It will also be used on working towards the quality of educational service being provided by child care providers."

The grant will allow for early Head Start — up to age 3 — expansion in conjunction with private child care providers enrolled in child care in Friendsville and Oakland, according to Yoder. The current Head Start has about 80 children and the grant will allow an early Head Start program with 24 children.

"For early Head Start ages zero to three there is a waiting list. This will allow us to dip into the waiting list to serve

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more children and families," said Yoder.

Head Start is a federal program that promotes school readiness for children under age 5.

"Giving more families access to high-quality early learning opportunities is one of the smartest investments we can make," said U.S. Rep. John Delaney. "Today's grant, which combines Head Start's resources with the organizational capabilities of Garrett County Community Action Committee, promises to make a real difference for families in Western Maryland."

Yoder said the community action committee was working closely with The Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private philanthropy for children at

risk of poor educational, economic, social and health outcomes. The Aspen Institute, an educational and policy studies organization, aided in obtaining the grant, Yoder said.

Founded in 1965, Garrett County Community Action Committee is a private non-profit corporation that provides services to county resi-

dents. It is governed by a 15-member board of directors composed of community leaders from across Garrett County. Delaney toured Garrett County Community Action's headquarters in Oakland last year and met with Yoder to discuss the organization's needs and priorities.

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