

# Community Action has positive impact in county

The numbers tell only half the story of the Garrett County Community Action Committee's effect on the local area, its president says.

The non-profit agency has worked for more than a half-century to build a stronger community and to provide services that improve the quality of life for county residents. Services cover a wide range of ages, from Early Head Start's programs for pregnant mothers, newborns and toddlers, to home-delivered meals and support services for older adults. In between is a wide array of programs to help with public transportation, emergency utility assistance and finding affordable housing.

Community Action President Duane Yoder listed the organization's accomplishments for 2017 with an remarkable list of statistics. Perhaps the most impressive of those figures is that one-third of all Garrett County households received some sort of assistance through one of Community Action's numerous programs.

For a single non-profit to have a direct effect on one-third of the county shows that Community Action can't be pigeonholed into a particular role — the "bus people" or the "Meals on Wheels people" or the "head start place." When such an array of services is offered, the effect on a sizeable portion of the county will be plainly evident.

In 2017, Community Action provided more than 46,000 meals — nearly 14,000 at five senior meal sites and more than 32,000 delivered by Meals on Wheels.

Garrett Transit Service put 571,791 miles on their gray buses last year with 152,408 trips logged by passengers.

Early childhood development programs enrolled 326 children, and 147 were deemed “fully kindergarten ready.”

Emergency services personnel helped 2,460 families receive heating and electricity assistance. Thirty-three homeless families were moved into affordable housing, and another 106 families were prevented from becoming homeless.

Community development grant funding included \$90,000 to increase access to broadband, \$142,000 to assist with Career Ladder and Career Coaching services; \$147,917 for Workforce Partners; and \$140,000 for municipal revitalization.

“Behind the numbers, behind the programs and services, behind the brick and mortar are you, the staff,” Yoder said in his February report to employees and supporters. “Without you, the numbers just wouldn’t add up. Our capacity to respond is often influenced by you, the staff.”

But it is the number of Community Action workers that tells the other part of the story. The buses run, the Head Start centers are open, the meals are delivered — but outside of those faces seen regularly by the public, few may take the time to consider the dozens of those working diligently behind the scenes to ensure a smooth-running operation.

The numbers may not tell the whole story, but they reflect the impact that Garrett County Community Action Committee has on thousands of lives — many on a daily basis. Our hats are off to them for the work they do, and while we hope the number of people needing help will someday decrease, we take comfort in the knowledge that Community Action personnel are on the job.