



Submitted photo

Kneeling, from left, are Lisa Michaels, Melissa Marple, Cindy Lipscomb, Michele Wolfe and DeAnna Schroyer; second row, Daphne Gooding, Kathy Reel, Trudy Gaither and Heather Cooper; back row, Mary Hannon, Nick Callis, Ryan Miller, Rhonda Finch, Elaine Miller, Autumn Ramsey, Bryan Moore, Ginger Clark, Vernon Pyle and Judy Fike. Not pictured are Glenda Guthrie and Cheryl Bittinger.

Community Action staffers attend team-building session

From Staff Reports

OAKLAND — In April, a team of more than 20 frontline staff of Garrett County Community Action Committee boarded Garrett Transit Service buses and traveled to Baltimore in order to take part in a team-building event.

The team was comprised of staff representing asset development, service coordination, aging and nutrition, family economic development and Garrett Transit Service — the five core departments of the agency.

In 2017, Garrett County Community Action served one in three households (4,047) and one in four residents of the county (7,603.)

“When serving as many people as we do on a daily basis, team-building events help our frontline coordinators to remain sharp,” stated Barbara Miller, vice president of family economic security at Community Action. “The needs that they have to address are often complex and can’t be solved without input and assistance of other departments at Community Action or outside partners. Whether problem solving, or working internally, finding solutions requires strong working relationships and trust.”

For the past year, the coordinators have been participating in regular monthly training meetings in a large group setting and in smaller teams throughout the month.

“The small team meetings

help to break down the silos of information and are hands-on, team-building exercises in order to emphasize the material and ideas being taught in the larger group setting, as well as reinforcing how to work together,” said Ryan Miller, family self sufficiency manager for the agency and a certified life coach.

Throughout the past year, each small team made multiple presentations to their peers in many interesting and creative ways to further reinforce the ideas and learning that takes place in the larger group. “The Baltimore event was the culmination of their trainings, which included topics ranging from self-care for service providers to trust-building with clients,” Ryan Miller said.

Teams dispersed after a short session with Barbara Miller on the first morning to compete in a scavenger hunt around Baltimore and the inner harbor area. The groups had to locate various places and take group “selfies” at each historical, or location of interest. Some locations also included “bonus” items to be collected by the team assigned to that location. The purpose of the activities was to enhance teamwork skills they had learned over the course of the year.

In an afternoon session, they not only spent time de-briefing on their morning experiences, but also reflected on what they had learned.

The keynote speaker and presenter for the retreat, Wyatt

Oroke, shared his story of overcoming barriers in education and with working with children who grow up under extremely challenging circumstances.

He shared how, despite the challenges he faced, the impact of one teacher when he was a child led him to his own life purpose: teaching. His journey has led him from a very comfortable life in California to one of the poorest schools in Baltimore. As a teacher, Oroke has sought to teach in some of the poorest sections in Baltimore City. He believes that if you fill your classroom with love today, you’re going to fill the world with love tomorrow.

His philosophy and actions — such as purchasing books for all his students, — has garnered the attention of network television. Over the past year, he has appeared on NBC’s “Today” show and on “Ellen.”

Before boarding the buses to return, the group took time to pose for a photo sporting red noses. The wearing of red noses is part of a national effort to raise awareness and funds that enable the work to end child poverty in America.

“Locally, Garrett County Community Action works to build community capacity in order to create opportunities which allow for children and families to thrive. We have to support the ongoing training and development of our frontline staff if we are going to succeed,” Barbara Miller said.