

Community Action hosts community development event

by Brenda Ruggiero
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — As part of Community Development Week 2018, the Community Development Network of Maryland and the Garrett County Community Action Committee hosted an event Monday highlighting the work of CAC in the local community.

Community Development Week ran Oct. 15-24. Events were held in a variety of communities across the state to highlight creative initiatives to revitalize neighborhoods, encourage affordable housing projects and provide a full range of community-based services.

In Garrett County, the event included Odette Ramos, executive director of the Community Development Network of Maryland, and Duane Yoder, president of Garrett County CAC, joining local officials and community leaders.

"We haven't done a community development event in Garrett County, so we wanted to come up," Ramos said. "Duane and Gregan (Crawford) and the team here have really done amazing work. We hear about it all the time, and now we want to see it and showcase it."

Julianna Albowicz from Sen. Chris Van Hollen's office attended and presented Yoder with a Senatorial Certificate "in recognition of a continued effort to provide affordable housing, business development and job resources for families in need, and with gratitude and appreciation for all that is done to make a difference in the lives of others."

Garrett County CAC has been serving the county for more than 50 years. Community action agencies — non-profit organizations that were created by the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act — work to connect elected officials, community and business leaders and low-income residents to collectively solve local problems and help people become self-sufficient.

Garrett County CAC is one



Staff photo by Brenda Ruggiero

Odette Ramos, executive director of the Community Development Network of Maryland, speaks to the group.

of 17 community action agencies in Maryland and several hundred around the country.

"Our organization's mission is simple — it's to improve the quality of life for people in need by empowering them to become more self-sufficient and by providing essential services in collaboration and cooperation with partners," Yoder said. "We are committed to reducing poverty and advancing opportunities for families in Garrett County."

GCCAC serves nearly 33 percent of households and 25 percent of county residents. It has been at the forefront of the Two Generation approach to client services — focused on creating opportunities for and addressing needs of both children and the adults in their lives together.

"Garrett County CAC has been a true leader in conducting innovative and holistic projects to strengthen its community and help families thrive," Ramos said.

Yoder gave a presentation that included a Garrett County profile, an overview of tools being used to achieve CAC's mission, information about the Two Generation approach, and a graph showing progress.

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Following the discussion at the CAC building, the group boarded a Garrett Transit Service bus for a tour of area projects involving Community Action.

- Oakland's B&O Train Station — Working with the Town of Oakland, GCCAC helped to facilitate opportunities which helped to refurbish the 1888 train station. Since that time, numerous other transportation-related venues have developed, the latest being a partnership with the B&O Museum in Baltimore.

- Garrett County Museum of Transportation — The site of the museum was to be turned into artist studios and gallery space. When it was determined that the former showroom couldn't support a second story addition, the building was razed and a transit museum was added. GCCAC owns the lot and has given the transportation museum a 99-year lease.

- Our Town Theatre — Working to help increase economic opportunity, the theatre will facilitate performances and activities related to those who have been impacted by cancer.

- Mountain Laurel Medical Center — The center is currently expanding in Oakland, opened a center in Grantsville



Staff photo by Brenda Ruggiero

Julianna Albowicz from Sen. Chris Van Hollen's office presents a Senatorial Certificate of appreciation to Duane Yoder, president of Garrett County Community Action.

and has plans to expand in McCoole in Allegany County.

- Judy Center — Operated by GCCAC, the center focuses on school readiness and is near an affordable housing complex, Overlook North.

- The Meadows at Mountain Lake — Opened in October 2017, this facility

offers 90 units for seniors, handicapped and disabled individuals. Future plans for the location include building a new Mary Browning Senior Center.

- Garrett Transit Service — This service is a demand response system throughout the county that provides for public transit needs, Head Start programming and non-emergency medical transportation.

- Glades West — Bradley Manor was Garrett County's first housing complex. Poor construction and design caused the units to become uninhabitable just a few years after opening. Once razed, Glades West was constructed and is approaching 30 years of occupancy.

- Liberty Mews — Completed in 2006, Liberty Mews offers multi-family housing units with an "old world" design aesthetic. The complex was the second phase of development of a larger project that will eventually create 77 additional units. Once completed, the project is anticipated to generate more than \$1 million per year in property tax revenue.

- Liberty Square — This was the first phase of development in a four-phase project. It provides 77 units of housing for seniors and disabled individuals.

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