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2017

Culture of Health
Prize Winner



Fall 2017

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Courtesy of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

A message from the STEPS Committee

by Diane Lee
GCHD

The Garrett County STEPS Committee is proud that our community has been awarded the 2017 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize. Garrett County is a model community for healthy living, offering quality health care, education, physical activity, and much more for the residents of the area. The partners of the STEPS Committee are among those who work hard to create the culture of health here in Garrett County.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) described Garrett County as tucked between Pennsylvania and West Virginia on the far western edge of Maryland's spanhandle, rural Garrett County (population 29,460) is a study in contrasts. Driving along one of its few main roads on a cool summer day, one passes fast-food restaurants and aging strip malls, small family farms, a big box store. Then a valley opens up on either side, bathed in Appalachia's green beauty.

Up at Deep Creek Lake, in the heart of the county, multimillion-dollar homes and fast-multiplying condos fuel a more than \$300 million tourism economy. Meanwhile, many county residents work seasonal and low-wage jobs at tourist-friendly restaurants, hotels and resorts, and the county faces a child-poverty rate of 19 percent, compared with 14 percent of all Maryland children. Dependent on industries such as health care, light manufacturing and farming, in addition to tourism, Garrett County's median household income is about two-thirds the state average.

To address the challenges and bridge economic, cultural and health divides, Garrett County has capitalized on a deep-rooted strength: Everyone seems to know everyone, and neighbors care for each other and band together. That community spirit has brought about a robust, data-driven health planning process focused on reducing disparities in housing, education, employment, income and health care so that all residents can thrive. This small town

spread across farmland and country roads has found a way to enable every high school graduate to attend community college for free and has raised \$4.9 million to build a cancer center in its county seat.

The RWJF Culture of Health Prize is a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation® and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.

The county's health planners have drawn in the most vulnerable residents — including those struggling with intergenerational poverty, chronic disease, and housing instability — county leadership, and health care and social services partners. They are encouraging participation and tracking progress using an online planning tool, MyGarrettCounty.com. The multifaceted collaborative effort has earned the county a 2017 Culture of Health Prize.

For information about the *STEPS Magazine*, persons may contact Diane Lee, Public Information Officer, Garrett County Health Department: diane.lee@maryland.gov, 301-334-7689, or 301-895-3111.

Children with Special Health Care Needs program offers services via RNs

OAKLAND — Nurse Care Coordination for Children with Special Health Care Needs is a free program provided through the Garrett County Health Department's Early Care Systems of Care programs. Through this program, services are delivered by a registered nurse.

The nurse care coordinator is available to assist parents and caregivers in accessing services and resources for their child with special health care needs. These services can include assisting families to obtain necessary equipment, locating specialty services, providing education, as-

sisting with educational needs, and linking families to health insurance and primary-care services.

Nurse Care Coordination services are available to parents and caregivers of children from birth through 18 years of age with special medical conditions and needs. Medical conditions and needs can include asthma, diabetes, and ADHD. For more information on the Nurse Care Coordination Program for Children with Special Health Care Needs, contact Early Care Systems of Care at the Garrett County Health Department at 301-334-7720.



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Serving the Community as Part of the Garrett County Health Department Since 1967

Garrett receives RWJF Culture of Health Prize

by Kimi-Scott McGreevy
GARRETT REGIONAL
MEDICAL CENTER

OAKLAND — Garrett County, Maryland, is one of eight winners of the 2017 RWJF Culture of Health Prize awarded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Prize honors communities for their unwavering efforts to ensure all residents have the opportunity to live healthier, happier lives. Garrett is the first community in Maryland to receive this coveted award.

Garrett County is being recognized nationally for pursuing innovative ideas and bringing partners together to rally around a shared vision of health. Chosen from more than 200 applicant communities across the country, Garrett County's award-winning efforts include the Com-

munity Action Committee's 2-Generation Program Garrett Regional Medical Center's Well Patient Program, and the Garrett County Health Department's www.mygarrettcountry.com, a state-of-the-art portal enabling people throughout the community to participate in discussions about health, work, education and more.

"We are very proud to have been chosen to receive this prize," said Mark Boucot, President and CEO of Garrett Regional Medical Center. "Garrett County has a collaborative spirit that permeates our response to the challenges we face. When we look at what needs to be done or what we'd like to see happen, everyone comes to the table to help figure out the best approach. That really defines how we look at health — at the

hospital, we rely on our partners in the community to inform our strategic planning to help make sure our patients are getting the comprehensive support they need. That collaborative essence sets our community apart."

"For the past five years, RWJF Culture of Health Prize communities have inspired hope across the country. We welcome these new eight Prize communities who are forging partnerships to improve health for their residents," said Richard Besser, MD, RWJF president and CEO. "There are now 35 prize-winning communities across the country that are thinking big, building on their strengths, and engaging residents as equal partners to tackle the problems that they see."

See RWJF, 23



Copyright Flynn Larsen. Photo courtesy of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

A group from Garrett County, Maryland, traveled to Princeton, New Jersey, to accept the 2017 Culture of Health Prize at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. From left are Rodney Glotfelty, former health officer; Shelley Argabright, Health Planner; Kevin Null, county administrator; Karen DeVore, Executive director of curriculum, instruction and administration; Amy Barnhouse, Mountain Laurel human resources specialist; Richard Besser, MD, RWJF president and CEO; and Bob Stephens, Garrett County health officer.



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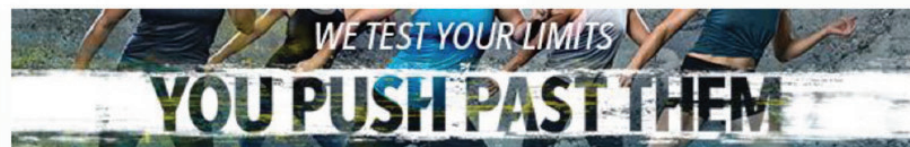
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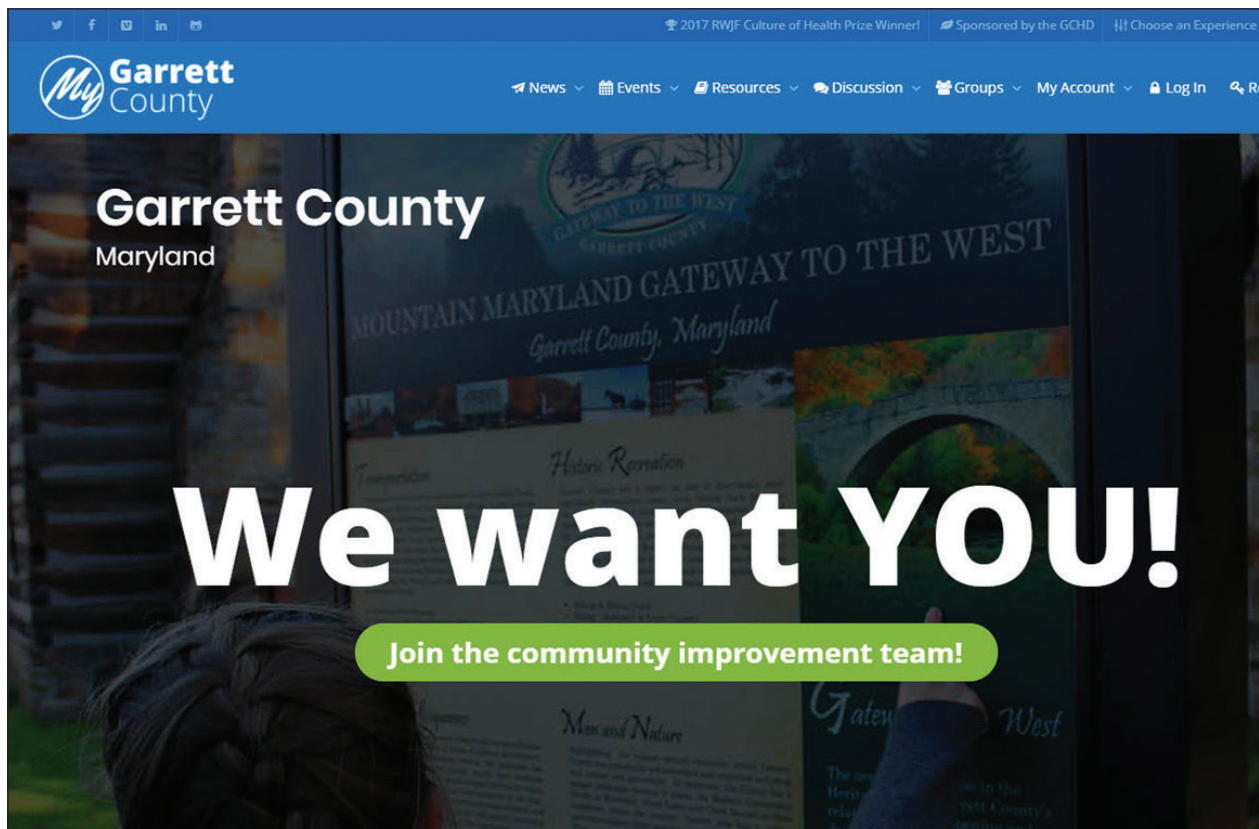


A collaborative platform for public health taking shape

by Shelley Argabrite, M.A., STRATEGIC HEALTH PLANNER, GARRETT CO. HEALTH DEPARTMENT

OAKLAND — The latest emerging practice in public health for digital community engagement is an innovative collaborative platform found at mygarrettcounty.com. For our rural Appalachian community, this platform is a radical shift away from the traditional bureaucratic process of creating a community

health improvement plan led by the local health department. In just 10 months, we've increased awareness exponentially. Stakeholders are not only aware of our local Community Health Improvement Planning process, but nearly 5 percent of our total population has actively engaged in formulating components of the next iteration of this plan. Creating a vision for our county and incrementally measuring our progress toward the goals we



Submitted photo

set together has created a true culture of collabora-

tion in Garrett County.

Transparent dialogue between local health officials, agency stakeholders, and the general public continues to be a key component in improving equity and building capacity. Strategically investing in digital technologies allows people to collaborate more efficiently and work better as a team, which is helping us to achieve our desired outcomes.

In the community forum of the adaptive planning tool found at mygarrettcounty.com, individuals have the space to openly discuss issues, concerns and suggest

solutions to address what matters to them most. Community feedback on such a large scale has informed measure development and prioritization, marking an important step toward ensuring that measures reflect what is most important. Action groups were created to employ methods that will stimulate sustainable mobilization of the discussions in the forum and actualize strategies for community improvement. Within action groups, multi-sectoral partners work collectively on a strategy reporting incremental data that ensures responsiveness of


the public health network in Garrett County.

With well over 55,000 page views and 1,485 active planning partners in less than 10 months, the planning tool has completely changed the way our community conducts strategic health planning.

What's most exciting is that we get to share this innovation with other communities! Our goal is to foster a culture of innovation in public health and successfully replicate and measure meaningful community engagement across our nation to improve health.

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Education, opportunity and ‘a bunch of care’

Courtesy of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

OAKLAND — When Garrett County, Maryland, native Shelley Argabrite said, “This is truly a community of caring,” she was speaking from experience. Like many, due to unfortunate circumstances, she experienced poverty as a single parent. Her resilience combined with assistance from the people in service agencies in the county helped her navigate the difficult situation, providing her family with, among other things, healthy food and a homebuyer’s grant that helped them secure a more sustainable future.

Now, she’s paying it forward. As the strategic health planner at Garrett County Health Department, she’s working to address the county’s most pressing health needs, in part by gathering input from those who struggle as she once did.

That “leave no one behind” attitude pervades in Garrett County and has led to creative solutions aimed at expanding opportunities available to residents. When Commissioner Jim Hinebaugh, then the county’s director of economic development, proposed starting four scholarships at Garrett College about a decade ago, the county’s Board of Commissioners rebuffed him. But not for long.



Photo by Tracie Van Auken

Noah Manges, a history student at Garrett College, has benefited from the scholarships offered to local students and plans to attend a four-year university after completing his associate’s degree at Garrett College.

“They said, ‘That’s going to make four people happy and a lot of people

mad,’” said Hinebaugh, a county commissioner since 2014. “So I did the math. If we offered free scholarships to all for two years of community college, it would be one cent on our tax rate.”

Hinebaugh’s eureka moment generated a scholarship program that enables Garrett County residents with a high school degree or GED to attend the college for free if they study full time and maintain a 2.0 grade-point average. The program will soon expand to include non-traditional age students.

“It was absolutely instrumental to me,” says John Corbin, public affairs specialist at the Garrett County Health Department, of his scholarship, which meant he spent only \$15 on a parking permit during his two years at Garrett College and graduated debt-free. “(Community college) is basically unaffordable to a lot of residents without the scholarship.”

If education is at the center of opportunity building in Garrett County — 1 in 5 residents has a bachelor’s degree or higher — so too is chipping away at poverty. The county’s 2-G, or two-generation program, which aims to improve outcomes for children and economic security for families, has been lauded by many, including Maryland

Gov. Larry Hogan. This year, he moved to create a commission that will study the approach as a model for the state.

“At the heart of the two-generation approach is the idea that you work with children and families simultaneously, but you do it in a way where your services are really integrated,” says Duane Yoder, president of Garrett County Community Action, a poverty reduction nonprofit.

Families work with staff to develop a “pathway plan” that includes at least one goal related to education, employment or financial management.

To leave poverty behind, families need places to live and ways to get to work. So Garrett County Community Action and its public and private partners have developed 700 affordable, low-income, mixed-income and workforce housing units. And the county’s Wheels-to-Work program helps families afford a used car, since Garrett, like many rural communities, lacks traditional public transit.

In every endeavor, the people of Garrett County are important partners.

“We work as a team with families,” says Barbara Miller, vice president for family economic security at Garrett County Community Action. “We listen to what they feel they need in their lives.”

GRMC ED team aims for opioid prevention

by Nicole McCullough
GRMC

OAKLAND — The staff in the Emergency Department of Garrett Regional Medical Center, an affiliate of WVU Medicine, is working to address the opioid crisis in Garrett County and the surrounding region using an electronic prescription database in conjunction with a strict limited narcotics prescription policy.

Karen Hershfeld, PAC, is leading GRMC’s efforts to develop improved policies and procedures regarding pain medications prescribed to patients in the ED. Working with GRMC’s Emergency Department physicians and using evidence based medicine, Hershfeld is changing prescribing patterns and focusing on a limited narcotics policy. This policy establishes the use of narcotics as the prescription of last resort, with medical staff looking at all options before resorting to narcotics for pain relief. In addition, the ED staff also utilizes an electronic database system



Submitted photo

Karen Hershfeld, PAC, reviews the state’s prescription electronic database.

of narcotic prescriptions developed by the State of Maryland, which enables staff to monitor previous drug prescriptions before administering or prescribing follow up medication. The combination of the new limited narcotics policy combined with the database information

is helping the ED avoid prescriptions that may lead to addiction or abuse by vulnerable individuals.

“Prevention is key in this fight against opioid addiction in our community,” said Hershfeld. “It is more effective to focus on preventing addiction

rather than treatment or incarceration.”

Prevention not only impedes addiction, it also helps manage the costs associated with addiction and abuse. Substance abuse costs the U.S. over \$600 billion annually. Drug addiction deterrence and treatment not only reduces drug use but the health and social costs linked to it. According to a 2016 report from the Surgeon General, every dollar that is invested in drug prevention yields a return of \$4 for treatment and \$7 from incarceration.

Hershfeld has teamed up with other local members of the Drug Free Communities Coalition to advocate working together and focusing on prevention as the leading method of fighting the epidemic. The Garrett County Health Department has medically assisted treatment programs for those seeking help with their addiction.

Hershfeld notes that there are many steps in winning the fight against this crisis.

“Focus on preventive actions, access to better treatment and proper overdose responses are all crucial steps in gaining control of this epidemic,” said Hershfeld. “But it doesn’t stop there. This community needs to work as a team to provide Narcan training, expanded options for recovery resources and better mental-health treatment. We have the ability to make a huge impact in our community by helping families avoid the incredibly negative consequences of opioid addiction.”

For information about community efforts to fight drug addiction, visit the www.AddictionHappens.org website, or attend the next meeting of either the Drug Free Communities Coalition, scheduled to take place Nov. 1, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Garrett County Health Department in Oakland, or the Drug Free Communities Coalition Action Team Nov. 14, at the same location.

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Doctor's work to be published in prestigious journal

by Nicole McCullough
GRMC

OAKLAND — A study done by Dr. Barbara L. Leighton, an anesthesiologist with Garrett Regional Medical Center, a proud affiliate of WVU Medicine, will be published in the November issue of *Anesthesia & Analgesia*, the official journal of the International Anesthesia Research Society.

Dr. Leighton's study focuses on the frequent post-operative pain of obstetric cesarean patients struggling with opioid issues who are receiving Suboxone. Patients receiving Suboxone, a treatment for opioid addiction, often face challenges with successful post-operative pain management. Dr. Leighton's work involved four obstetric patients who were all taking



Submitted photo

Dr. Barbara L. Leighton's work in anesthesia is to be published in the November issue of *Anesthesia & Analgesia*.

the medicine Suboxone. It is most commonly prescribed as a replacement for methadone and given to patients with previous heroin usage. Suboxone is being prescribed more often, as it is easier to manage and admin-

ister to patients and there is less of a chance of opiate abuse due to the pharmacological makeup of the drug, Dr. Leighton said.

The opioid crisis in rural Appalachia is particularly prevalent in younger factions of the popula-

tion and consequently affects a growing number of pregnant women. Dr. Leighton noticed this phenomenon locally, which led to her desire to find a healthy solution for her pregnant patients. "I wanted to come up with a better way of treating people and improve care for patients at GRMC," Dr. Leighton said. "When I found what I thought to be a workable solution, I wanted to encourage my colleagues beyond the Garrett region to use my findings in order to provide good pain relief in a way that has nothing to do with opiates."

Dr. Leighton's solution involved an extra step during the epidural process. Dr. Leighton first administered a thoracic epidural in the upper back area using the non-opiate bupivacaine. This was given in addition to

the more common lumbar epidural in the lower region of the back. This approach led to lower pain scores of 1/10 in the first 24 hours and a complete lack of pain the second day after cesarean delivery.

The Suboxone patients were treated successfully without the use of additional opioids. As well as gaining effective pain relief, patients showed greater mobility in the two days following cesarean birth. "This increased the mother's ability to care for the child and progressed the healing process," said Dr. Leighton. "The healing for cesarean deliveries should begin immediately."

"We're very pleased that the work of Dr. Leighton is being published in a professional journal," said Mark Boucot, GRMC president and CEO. It

speaks to Dr. Leighton's commitment to our community and the patients she serves that she created and conducted such a study, even though GRMC is not a teaching hospital. We hope her work receives the recognition and acceptance it deserves; we're very proud that she is affiliated with GRMC."

Dr. Leighton's study titled "Case Reports of Successful Post-Operative Pain Management in Buprenorphine Maintenance Therapy Patients" will appear in the November issue of *Anesthesia & Analgesia*. The November issue will focus entirely on substance abuse. The journal provides the practice-oriented, clinical research needed by anesthesiologists to keep current and provide the most favorable care to patients.

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GRMC plans for the future of health care in community

by Nicole McCullough
GRMC

OAKLAND — Garrett Regional Medical Center (GRMC), an affiliate of WVU Medicine, has been serving the Garrett County region since 1950, when it opened with small inpatient and emergency services departments. Sixty-seven years and six facility additions later, the hospital plays an even more vital role in the health care of Garrett and western Allegany County, as well as surrounding communities in West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Meeting the needs of a population spread across three states and eight counties has resulted in continued investment in new technologies, new medical services, and new facilities to provide greater convenience for people



Submitted photo

Pictured reviewing the plans for the Oak Street Renovation are Mark Boucot, GRMC president and CEO, and Steven Peterson, GRMC vice president of operations and CIO.

wishing to seek care from GRMC.

The latest embodiment of GRMC's commitment to caring for the community can be seen in the ongoing construction projects undertaken both at the main hospital facili-

ty and renovations at the former Get 'n Go Bakery on Oak Street, where the hospital's Health Information Management (medical records) Department will be housed. Construction on this latest project began in Au-

gust and is scheduled to be completed in the winter of 2017-18.

The need to move the medical records department became clear with the ongoing success of the WVU Cancer Institute's James and Shirley Bailey Regional Cancer Center on the hospital's main campus. Moving the Health Information Management Department off-site will facilitate a much needed expansion of the Cancer Center. The plan includes additional exam rooms, a dedicated pharmacy for mixing and administering chemotherapy medications, a medical library, a survivor's room that can be used as a meeting space, and additional office space.

"The success of the James and Shirley Bailey Regional Cancer Center has given us the opportunity to expand services to

the patients of the GRMC region," said Mark Boucot, GRMC president and CEO. "This expansion will enable us to better serve the needs of the community and to ensure an even higher level of care."

The ability to expand the Cancer Center was made possible in large part by the generosity of the local community.

"Our donors have generated a level of financial support that will touch the lives of many cancer patients and their families well into the future," said Boucot. "Their generous support has created a lasting legacy of cancer care in our region that will live into perpetuity."

The Cancer Center project is expected to be completed in 2018. In addition to the expansion of the Cancer Center and the Oak Street project, in

the last two years GRMC has renovated its PACU, its operating rooms, and its patient rooms, along with an addition of a brand new wing. This new addition, the Robert and June Harvey Medical Pavilion, houses a state-of-the-art Family Centered Maternity Suite, an extension of the Med/Surg floor, a newly designed Subacute Rehabilitation Unit, along with education classrooms for the staff and boardroom facilities.

The numerous renovations and building additions have enabled the GRMC clinical staff to offer more services and treatment options, including the use of state-of-the-art technologies, patient protocols, and individual patient consults with specialists at WVU Medicine.

Maryland businesses honored for their worksite wellness accomplishments

by Diane Lee
GCHD

OAKLAND — Two local businesses, with assistance from the Garrett County Health Department, received Healthiest Maryland Business status and were recently recognized as Healthiest Maryland Businesses Wellness at Work awardees for their exemplary accomplishments in worksite health promotion.

Employers in the program earn a Gold, Silver, Bronze, or On the Path award based on their wellness activities to establish leadership support, create committees, survey the needs and interests of employees, set health improvement goals, and develop monitoring tools to track outcomes over time.

"We are proud of our partner businesses for supporting their employees to be healthier versions of themselves," said Amy Ritchie,



Submitted photo

GCC Technologies was recently recognized as a Healthiest Maryland Businesses Wellness at Work awardee in the On The Path Award category. Pictured above are Amy Ritchie and Linda Costello, Garrett County Health Department, with GCC Technologies Wellness Coordinator Karen Wright and owners Shirley and Jim Bailey.

Workplace Wellness Coordinator at the Garrett County Health Department. Within their first year of being a Healthiest Maryland Business, The Wisp (Everbright Pacific, LLC) received the Gold Award, the highest possible status, and GCC Technologies,

LLC, achieved the On The Path Award. Employees spend a large part of their waking hours at their workplace, so helping them make healthier choices at work extends into their entire life."

See WELLNESS, 23

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Just Like You! campaign to launch in October

by Diane Lee
GARRETT COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

OAKLAND — The beginning of the new school year also marks the start of another Just Like You! campaign year, reminding parents, guardians, grandparents, teachers, coaches — all adults — the importance of positive role modeling for children.

Just Like You! is promoted throughout the county via support of collaborating partners of the Garrett County Health Department, including the Judy Center, Community Action Committee, and Garrett County Public Schools.

The program is designed to teach children the importance of taking care of their bodies by practicing healthy behaviors. Healthy Adult behaviors have an impact on children's behaviors, such as eating fruits and vegetables, brushing teeth, exercising, and buckling up in a vehicle.

"We all know that children are copycats at this age and like to im-

itate adults," said Sandy Miller, coordinator of the campaign at the health department. "At times, children can receive mixed messages regarding tobacco, alcohol and other drug use. Adults need to be aware of what message their actions and words may be giving the child."

A well-known child development educator and author, Karen Stephens, said, "It's easy to dispense don'ts to our kids: 'Don't smoke.' 'Don't drink and drive.' 'Don't do drugs.' 'Don't lie.' It takes much more effort and discipline to practice what we preach. It takes a strong character to give our kids a good role model to copy, because copy us they will."

"It takes intention to help mold children into vessels of health and wellness," Miller said. "We all need to be aware that children watch what we do and say, and imitate us. Whether you are the parent, the bus driver, the teacher, the coach, the aunt, the babysitter, the older sibling, we all need to be a good role model for the kind of adult we want

these youngsters to become."

"Watch and listen for the Just Like You Campaign in *The Republican* newspaper, on the radio, and in your young child's classroom," Miller said. "Partner agencies will be posting campaign materials on their websites and Facebook pages. Information will also be on the copycatfun.com website, including games, pictures, videos, printables, and chances to win prizes. Cats makes the website come to life for children while giving parents/guardians information to help keep the family healthy and well. What can you do? Watch for the information, pass it along to your friends, and frequent the copycatfun.com website. We can all make a difference in the lives of the youngest residents of Garrett County."

For more information about Just Like You, copycatfun.com, or to be added to the distribution list for the campaign, call Health Education and Outreach at the Garrett County Health Department, 301-334-7730 or 301-895-3111.



Submitted photo

Just Like You! children are leading the way to educate parents, caregivers, teacher, and adults about how to be positive role models for children. Kaitlyn Yoder was part of a video ad to educate about prescription drug safety and role modeling, RESPECT RX. For her part, Kaitlyn said, "Grandma, I am learning from you to lock up dangerous medicines." To view the video, go to copycatfun.com and check out all the resources on the importance of adults being positive role models for children.

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Technology bolsters care for new mothers, newborns at GRMC

by Nicole McCullough
GRMC

OAKLAND — Garrett Regional Medical Center, an affiliate of WVU Medicine, now provides remote access to fetal monitoring of new mothers that enables physicians to remotely monitor their patients in the GRMC Family Centered Maternity Suite during labor and delivery.

The system in use, Centricity Perinatal, facilitates communication and patient monitoring at a level that allows physicians to use a secure tablet or smart phone to see how both the fetus and the mother are faring clinically. The system provides patient information that is ongoing, allowing medical staff to stay abreast of labor and delivery patients and stay ahead of any issues that may arise.

“This state-of-the-art technology is putting our Family Centered Maternity Suite at the forefront of keeping labor and delivery patients healthy and safe during birth and after,” says Kendra Thayer, GRMC’s Chief Nursing Officer. “Having fetal and mother vital signs literally at their fingertips regardless of their location in the hospital allows our physicians to access patient information and respond accordingly as needed. This system provides a level of connectivity that is making a significant difference in the lives of our patients.”

The Centricity system acts to prevent

problems from arising by keeping clinicians keyed into a patient’s vital statistics. Labor can be a lengthy process; the three stages of labor — early, active and giving birth — can vary in length from a few hours to more than a day. Because of this, clinicians traditionally are in and out of the mother’s room, checking progress and monitoring both mother and fetal health stats. This new system allows for that monitoring to be done by the clinician even when that clinician is not providing direct care to that patient.

“We appreciate the support this enables us to give our patients, as well as the clinical record this system creates,” notes Charlene Bennett, Family Centered Maternity Suite Charge Nurse. “It documents fetal monitoring, vital signs and health events as they happen, along with the impact of our response as we react in real time. I think this system gives families a sense of security and supports the fact that they are receiving the best care available. Our mission states that we treat every patient like a member of our own family, and that’s the philosophy we use as we implement new technologies and services.”

The system integrates alerts and reminders to notify clinicians of protocols, automatically fills in patient information that allows staff to avoid transcribing from hard-copy charts and provides a record of overall department activity that



Submitted photo

Pictured reviewing fetal monitoring outcomes are Tony Amato, system manager GE Centricity, RNC-OB, and Charlene Bennett, director of Obstetrical Services, RNC-OB, BSN and MSHA.

can be reviewed to allow for improved approaches to care.

The Centricity Perinatal system is the latest improvement in technology at Garrett Regional Medical Center.

“We are constantly looking at how we can improve the care we provide,” says GRMC CEO Mark Boucot. “Hands-on

care by physicians that the community knows and trusts is the hallmark of Garrett Regional Medical Center. The Centricity Perinatal system is the latest tool that our clinicians can use to enhance the safety and health of our newborns and new mothers.”

Every day is a good day to get rid of unwanted prescription drugs

by Diane Lee
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Saturday is National Drug Take Back Day, when the Drug Enforcement Administration is giving the public its 14th opportunity in 7 years to prevent pill abuse and theft by ridding their homes of potentially dangerous expired, unused and unwanted prescription drugs.

In Garrett County, three permanent drop boxes are available for disposal of pills: Oakland Town Hall (8:30-4:30), Garrett County Sheriff’s Office (24/7), and McHenry State Police Barracks (24/7). These locations cannot accept liquids or needles or sharps, only pills or patches. The service is free and anonymous, no questions asked.

Last April, Americans turned in 450 tons (900,000 pounds) of prescription drugs at almost 5,500 sites operated by the DEA and more than 4,200 of its state and local law enforcement partners. Overall, in its 13 previous Take Back events, DEA and its partners have taken in over 8.1 million pounds—more than 4,050 tons—of pills.

This initiative addresses a vital public safety and public health issue. Medi-

cines that languish in home cabinets are highly susceptible to diversion, misuse and abuse. Rates of prescription drug abuse in the U.S. are alarmingly high, as are the number of accidental poisonings and overdoses due to these drugs. Studies show that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet. In addition, Americans are now advised that their usual methods for disposing of unused medicines—flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash—both pose potential safety and health hazards.

The local drop boxes are provided by Garrett County Drug Free Communities Coalition to prevent prescription and opioid abuse in cooperation with the Garrett County Sheriff’s Office, the Maryland State Police, Oakland Town Hall, the Behavioral Health Administration and SAMSHA. For more information about the disposal of prescription drugs or about the Take Back Day, call Sadie Liller at the Garrett County Health Department at 301-334-7730 or 301-895-3111, or visit the DEA Diversion website.

A Culture of Health



Copyright 2017 Tracie Van Auken. Courtesy of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Melissa Marple, a Garrett County resident, plays with her daughter, Braylon, 2, at the Garrett College Community Aquatic and Recreation Complex in McHenry, Maryland. Open to everyone for a sliding-scale fee, the 5-year-old complex offers a pool, gym, basketball court, and exercise classes. It is also the site of the “I Can Swim!” program, a free four-day session of swim lessons taught to every Garrett County kindergartner. “We want to make sure every kid in the county has the opportunity to learn to swim safely,” says Steve Putnam, director of the complex.

Natural resources become a landscape for health

Courtesy of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

OAKLAND — Of all the difficult questions children have asked Crellin Elementary School Principal Dana McCauley, this one about a stream behind her Garrett County, Maryland, school has proved the most fruitful: “Why is that water orange?”

The answer, she would later learn, was acid leaking from an abandoned coal company site. But understanding the source of the discolored water was just the beginning.

McCauley and her staff saw in the then-state-owned property a sow’s ear that could be turned into a silk purse. In 2004 they worked with the state of Maryland and the community to clean up the creek and soil, acquire the property and build groundwater treatment ponds and walkways. Today, the water flows clear and the school’s five-and-a-half acre outdoor learning laboratory — where students study wetlands, stock the creek with trout they have raised, and tend chickens, goats, sheep and a garden on their own farm — is nationally recognized.

“It’s opened a whole new door for what we can teach the kids,” McCauley says.

She and others in Garrett County are

increasingly taking advantage of the area’s natural beauty and resources to bolster education, environmental health and well-being, physical activity and community cohesion.

For example, reclamation efforts involving state, federal and private entities have revitalized the north branch of the Potomac River, which draws the border between Garrett County and West Virginia. Twenty-five years ago, it was declared “dead” because of acid drainage.

“Everybody worked together to clean it up,” says Mike Dreisbach, president of the nonprofit Garrett Trails and owner of Savage River Lodge in northeastern Garrett County. “Today it’s one of the best trout fisheries on the East Coast.”

Ironically, though, in this county whose lakes, parks and streams draw droves of outdoor-activity enthusiasts, about one-third of residents lack access to places where they can be physically active. Focus group participants in the county’s 2016 health needs assessment said even the few dollars it costs to visit a state park is an obstacle for some.

The county listened and responded. “We’re encouraging people to use natural resources that are free,” says John Corbin,

public affairs specialist for Garrett County Health Department.

To make outdoor recreation and fitness more accessible to all, Garrett Trails is working to complete the Eastern Continental Divide Loop. The series of multi-use, multi-surface trails will connect Garrett County’s 76,000 acres of parks, lakes and forests with towns such as Grantsville, Oakland, Loch Lynn Heights and Deer Park. Local governments are working on plans to build sidewalks and recreational trails, linking historic sites, low-income housing and town centers.

A health department grant will enable Garrett Trails to place people-counters along existing trails for a 10-year study of how people use the trails — where they go, how long they walk or bike. The health department is also surveying residents to identify the existing barriers to physical activity and to understand how people are using trails and sidewalks.

The county’s harsh winters — average snowfall tops 100 inches a year — remain a tough nut to crack. So the county is working toward having more indoor activities at senior centers and schools. And the six-year-old indoor Community Recreation and Aquatic Center at Garrett



Photo by Tracie Van Auken

Students Jackson Hordubay, 10, and Drew Hordubay, 12, examine a rock in the creek behind Crellin Elementary School.

College is open to the public — residents, students and tourists — year-round, with sliding scale membership fees and breathtaking window views from the indoor pool of the surrounding mountains outside.

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Living Legacy honors donors

by Nicole McCullough
GRMC

Garrett Regional Medical Center hosted the Living Legacy Foundation of Maryland for a Flag Raising Ceremony in recognition of National Donate Life Month last week. Donate Life Month is celebrated every year in April and it honors the decision of organ, eye and tissue donors and their families and brings a greater awareness to the more than 118,000 people waiting nationally for a life saving organ transplant.

Guest speaker for the ceremony was Mike Butler, a transplant recipient who now serves as an ambassador for Donate Life. Butler received his transplant over twenty years ago and acknowledges daily the selfless gift his donor gave him. "I think of Kelly, my donor, and her family every day. I carry "Kelly's Spirit" in everything I do and everywhere I go." In addition to being an ambassador for Donate Life, Butler also participates as an athlete in the World Transplant Games to be held in Malaga, Spain this year. These games aim to raise awareness of organ donation through sport and physical activity.

"Garrett Regional Medical Center is proud to assist the Living Legacy Foundation in raising awareness of the importance of organ, eye and tissue donation," explained Reba Rush,



Submitted photo

Pictured from left are Mike Butler, transplant recipient and Donate Life Ambassador; Sarah Weaver and Laurel Gaffney, Living Legacy Foundation; and Mark Boucot, GRMC president and CEO.

GRMC Director of Quality/Risk Management. "In Maryland alone, more than 3,800 residents are waiting for a life saving organ transplant. GRMC raised the donor flag for the month of April in recognition of Donate Life Month, and will continue to raise the flag with each donor."

GRMC works closely with the Living Legacy Foundation of Maryland as an organ procurement organization and Tissue Bank along with 36 other hospitals in the state. Maryland's online donor registry can be found at www.donatelifemaryland.org and allows Maryland residents to designate themselves as organ, eye and tissue donors, as well sharing their decision to donate with family and friends.

Garrett County Health Department's flu clinics schedule is announced

by Diane Lee
GCHD

The Garrett County Health Department began offering seasonal flu and pneumonia immunizations on Oct. 12. The vaccines are available at several more walk-in clinics at two Health Department sites (1025 Memorial Drive, Oakland, and 28 Hershberger Lane Grantsville) and at the community sites listed below.

"Getting an annual flu vaccine is the first and best way to protect yourself and your family from the flu," said Bob Stephens, Garrett County Health Officer. "Flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations."

The walk-in clinics schedule is as follows:

- GCHD (Oakland), Oct. 27, (Friday), 10 a.m. — 6 p.m.
- Swanton Senior Center, Oct. 30, (Monday), 11 a.m. — 1 p.m.
- Bloomington Fire Hall, Oct. 30,

(Monday), 3 — 6 p.m.

- GCHD (Oakland), Nov. 9, (Thursday), 10 a.m. — 6 p.m.

- GCHD (Grantsville), Nov. 17, (Friday), 10 a.m. — 6 p.m.

Insurance providers, including Medicare Part B, will be billed as appropriate. Insurance cards should be brought to the clinic. There will be no out-of-pocket costs the flu shot for anyone, regardless of insurance status. Pneumonia vaccine will also be available at these clinics for insured patients.

Flu Mist nasal spray flu vaccine will not be offered at these clinics because CDC has recommended against its use this year.

For questions about flu vaccine, contact your doctor, or call the health department at 301-334-7770 or

301 895-3111. Visit garretthealth.org/influenza for more information about the flu vaccine clinics at or call the Flu Information Hotline at 301-334-7697 or 301 895-3113. Clinics in Kitzmiller and Friendsville were held earlier this month.

Diabetes.

Heart Disease.

Asthma.

Depression.

What do these illnesses have in common?

Untreated, they can be deadly. Depression is a disease, not a weakness, and can lead to suicide.

Fortunately, depression can be treated and lives saved when symptoms are recognized and medical help is sought.

Most people with depressive illness do not seek treatment, although the great majority, even those whose depression is severe can be helped. Thanks to years of fruitful research, there are now psychosocial therapies (cognitive/behavioral, "talk" or interpersonal) and, if needed, medications that ease the pain of depression.

Some symptoms may include feeling:

Nervous or "empty"
Guilty or worthless
Like no one loves you
Like life is not worth living

Or if you are:

Enjoying things less than you used to
Sleeping more or less than usual
Eating more or less than usual

If you, or someone you know, has some of these symptoms for more than two weeks, tell someone about your symptoms. Speak with a doctor, nurse, or mental health counselor.

Consider having a friend or family member help you make the call. There is also a toll free crisis hotline in Maryland: 1-800-422-0009.

For more information and referral regarding depression and other mental health needs, contact the Garrett County Behavioral Health Authority at (301)334-7440.

Health Department collaborates with dental clinics on grant for blood-pressure screenings

by Diane Lee
GCHD

The Garrett County Health Department is working with four local dental clinics on a grant which has the dental offices identify patients with high blood pressure. The participating offices are Dream Dental, Dr. Terry Dornburg, Mullins Family Dentistry and the Health Department Dental Clinic. The grant is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Oral health is an integral part of overall health and well-being throughout a person’s life,” said Amy Ritchie, Registered Dietician at Garrett County Health Department. “The CDC saw this as a valuable opportunity for oral health systems to impact chronic disease outcomes by intervening on a population that may not be reached through the medical health care system.”

The dental offices were given digital blood pressure systems,

and are asked to use the equipment to check blood pressures of all patients who are 18 years old or older. After taking two blood pressures, the average is recorded. If the patient’s reading can be classified as having hypertension, they are provided educational material on ways to lower their blood pressure. A referral is sent to the patient’s primary care physician for follow up. In September, 378 patients had their blood pressure taken through this program.

Dental clinics are also encouraging their patients who use tobacco products to quit and are referring them to Garrett County Health Department’s cessation program and to Maryland’s Tobacco Quit Line -1-800-QUIT-NOW.

The Grant reads: The Institute of Medicine has affirmed that integrating oral health into the medical health care system would promote better overall health and improve access to all preventive health services. In Maryland, the majority of

adults (70.2 percent), an estimated 3.25 million Marylanders, report having visited a dentist in the past year. Even among Maryland adults who have not seen a doctor for a routine checkup in five or more years, almost half (48.8 percent) have seen a dentist in the past year.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in Maryland, killing over 11,000 Marylanders each year. Meanwhile, hypertension, a major risk factor for heart disease, affects more than one third (33.6 percent) of Maryland adults. By identifying and treating undiagnosed hypertension through oral health and chronic disease collaboration, Maryland can significantly reduce heart disease death, disability and associated risk factors.”

For more information about this program, or the tobacco cessation program, call the Health Department at 301-334-7730 or 301-895-3111.

Local fresh produce



Submitted photo

A Culture of Health: Charles DeBerry and his daughter, Anna DeBerry, 12, pack boxes of fresh produce at the DeBerry Farm, a member of the Garrett Growers Cooperative. Founded to ensure fresh food grown in Garrett County can reach as many residents as possible, the cooperative delivers fresh produce to members of its Veggie Box subscription program. Boxes are available to low-income residents at a discount, and local groups sponsor subscriptions for some low-income families and people with chronic diseases.



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- ✓ Call Maryland Health Connection at (855) 642-8572 to enroll.

For Medical Assistance enrollment:

- ✓ Online enrollment at www.MarylandHealthConnection.gov.
- ✓ Call Healthy Families at the Garrett County Health Department to answer your questions or to schedule an appointment:
Oakland: (301) 334-7720
Grantsville: (301) 895-5699, ext. 201

You may visit us at one of our convenient locations:

- ✓ 1025 Memorial Drive, Room 204, Oakland, MD 21550
- ✓ 28 Hershberger Lane, First Floor, Grantsville, MD 21536



Do you need health insurance? We can help!

by Diane Lee
GCHD

The Open Enrollment Period for the Health Insurance Marketplace 2018 is November 1 to December 15, 2017. There are three options for health insurance enrollment, including online enrollment at www.MarylandHealthConnection.gov; or calling the Western Maryland Health Insurance Connector Navigator for assistance with the application at 301-501-5700 or 888-202-0212; or calling Maryland Health Connection at 855-642-8572 to enroll over the phone. Plans enrolled during this open enrollment period will begin January 1, 2018.

Medical Assistance/

Medicaid enrollment may be completed anytime throughout the year by either enrolling online at www.MarylandHealthConnection.gov; or by calling Healthy Families at the Garrett County Health Department for assistance: Oakland: 301-334-7720; Grantsville: 301-895-5699, ext. 201

Appointments may be scheduled at one of the Healthy Families locations week days from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 1025 Memorial Drive, Room 204, Oakland; or at 28 Hershberger Lane, First Floor, Grantsville. Early morning and late afternoon appointments can be arranged when needed.

Changing lives by shortening distances

Courtesy of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

OAKLAND — Steve Knepp is a rare sort of early childhood educator: one with a commercial driver's license. He needs it to drive a specially outfitted, Wi-Fi enabled school bus — carrying books, toys, craft and science supplies, and computers for the grown-ups — across Garrett County, Maryland.

At each stop, Knepp is joined by teachers who offer hands-on activities, a read-aloud session, tips for parents, and referrals to developmental screenings and academic services. Family service providers link families to financial and employment assistance, mental health and substance abuse programs, and other services. Children and

their families leave the bus with a free book and bag of groceries.

"The bus is one of the main ways we're able to connect with families we were never able to reach before," Knepp says.

The Learning Beyond the Classroom bus belongs to a constellation of traveling services Garrett County has put in place to shorten distances for residents in an area where roads are few and population centers dispersed. Many towns lack grocery stores and gas stations, and the county has no public transportation system, though nonprofit social service provider Garrett County Community Action runs an on-call van.

But if you want fresh produce, farm cooperative Garrett Growers will deliver through its Veggie Box program, with about half of subscriptions sponsored by nonprofit and government agencies for low-income families and individuals with chronic diseases. The county's Meals on Wheels program, run by Garrett County Community Action, brings seniors and the disabled both daily food and regular health care in the form of a nurse's visit every six months. And the nonprofit is working with Garrett Regional Medical Center on a pilot project that would deliver patients a month of meals



Photo courtesy of Tracie Van Auken

Brantley Lantz, 5, reads and drinks milk on the Learning Beyond the Classroom Bus as it sits in front of Crellin Elementary School. The bus holds a library and has learning games for children, and offers healthy snacks.

after discharge.

Reaching out is a formula the medical center has found success with already. It matches patients at high risk of readmission with nurse navigators, social workers and community health workers, who coach them through recovery over the phone and at their homes. Today, the center has the lowest readmission rates in Maryland.

Many community health workers have walked in the same shoes as their patients as they manage chronic conditions themselves. Community health worker Ed Kight has lost 30 pounds and quit smoking since being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes two years ago.

"I'm able to tell my pa-

tients that if they put their minds to it, they can make healthy changes," he says.

Through the health department's nurse home visiting program for new moms, Sonya Kiser was able to see that her baby — now just over a year old — was developing and growing well. Her nurse also helped her set and achieve goals for herself, such as finishing her high school degree online and getting a driver's license. This year, she's starting higher education courses to be certified as a veterinarian assistant.

Going to the people can, in some instances, make up for limited resources, says County Health Officer Bob Stephens. "What we have, we make it work," he says.

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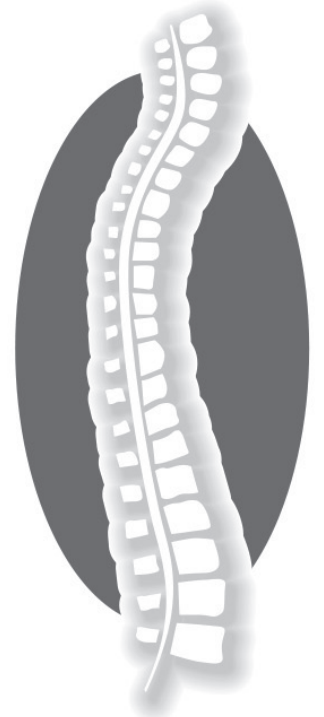
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Needles, including EpiPens, should be placed in a heavy plastic container with a lid, labeled 'sharps', and placed in household trash.

- McHenry State Police Barracks (24/7)
- Garrett County Sheriff's Office (24/7)
- Oakland City Hall (M-F 8:30-4:30pm)



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Mobile Friendly!

If you cannot access one of the prescription drop boxes, please dispose of medications in wet kitty litter or coffee grounds. Place in a plastic bag or bowl and safely place in the garbage. For additional information, call Kim Madigan, GC Landfill, at 301-387-0322.

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day: October 28, 2017

GRMC earns Bronze Level Wellness at Work Award

by Nicole McCullough
GRMC

OAKLAND — Garrett Regional Medical Center has been recognized by The Healthiest Maryland Businesses Wellness at Work Program for its commitment to improving employee health and well-being.

Healthiest Maryland Businesses (HMB) is a collaborative of Maryland businesses with a shared mission of improving health through worksite wellness efforts. The goals of Healthiest Maryland Businesses are to raise awareness about the importance of sustaining a healthy workforce, recruit leaders who are champions of healthy workplace practices and policies, assist businesses with worksite wellness programs, and recognize businesses for their commitment and success.

The Wellness at Work Awards serve to recognize

Maryland Healthiest Businesses members and highlight wellness initiatives that meet all the components of the CDC's Workplace Health Model. Based on this criterion, GRMC was presented with the Bronze Level Award. GRMC has taken some of the first crucial steps to establish worksite wellness practices and identify a wellness champion in its pursuit of worksite wellness practices that promote a culture of health throughout the entire organization. Leading the charge for positive workplace wellness practices is GRMC Benefits and Employee Wellness Coordinator Linda Peterson. Peterson notes that while employers have a responsibility to provide a safe workplace, they also have abundant opportunities to promote individual health and cultivate a healthy work environment. By using effective workplace wellness programs, companies can reduce health risks

and improve the quality of life which can positively affect direct costs, such as insurance premiums and workers compensation claims.

"I am very happy for Garrett Regional Medical Center to be recognized by Healthiest Maryland Businesses Wellness at Work with the Bronze Award," Peterson said. "Garrett Regional Medical Center and our employee wellness program, Better Health for a Better You, are committed to promoting a culture of wellness in our workplace and improving the quality of life of our employees. I believe it is important to try different strategies, programs and avenues of outreach to encourage our employees to engage in improving their health. While every outreach is not successful, I believe there are no failures. Those who aren't successful are learning opportunities for moving forward."



Submitted photo

Linda Peterson, GRMC benefit and employee wellness coordinator, is shown with GRMC's Bronze Award for its Wellness at Work program.



Garrett County Lighthouse, Inc.



Garrett County Lighthouse, Inc. is a private nonprofit behavioral health organization since 1992 that provides psychiatric rehabilitation services for those diagnosed with a severe and persistent mental illness. These services are designed to assist clients in obtaining the maximum level of community functioning. Garrett County Lighthouse, Inc. strives to decrease client hospitalizations and increase each client's overall quality of life. We believe that the clients we serve have the right to personal dignity, respect, and the highest possible degree of independence. Garrett County Lighthouse, Inc. is committed to services that promote the client's quality of life, focus on the client's strengths, foster independence, and honor the rights, wishes, and needs of the clients. Therefore, Garrett County Lighthouse, Inc.'s mission is to deliver the services that meet the needs of the client in a manner that is respectful, responsive, and responsible. Our goals are to empower clients to make informed choices about the future; to develop skills and resources to enhance those choices; to promote and protect client's rights; and to provide opportunities for clients to express preference about the services, and to support the process of recovery.

PRP

Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program provides both on-site and off-site services. We offer on-site services Monday-Wednesday 8 am- 1:30 pm. Off-site services are provided 5 days a week. On-site services include: Breakfast, lunch and a snack, self-care skills, life coaching, social skills, transportation to appointments, local shopping, classes & activities. Some other services include: Medication monitoring, case management & advocacy.

Services provided by Residential Rehabilitation Program promotes the clients ability to engage and participate in appropriate community activities, and in a supportive environment, enables the clients to develop the daily skills needed for independent functioning. RRP is located in the community, offers a home-like environment & provides goal directed Psychiatric Rehabilitation and integration into community life.

RRP

Crisis/Respite

Residential Crisis & Respite Services offers intensive mental health and support services that are provided to an adult with mental illness who is experiencing or is at risk of a psychiatric crisis that would impair the client's ability to function in the community and is designed to prevent a psychiatric inpatient admission, provide an alternative to psychiatric inpatient admission, shorten the length of inpatient stay, or reduce the pressure on general hospital emergency departments.

For more information, please contact us: 301-334-9126 or gclighthouse@shentel.net ~ 20 E. Oak Street, Oakland, MD 21550

Website: www.garrettcountyighthouse.org & be sure to like us on Facebook!

Coping with grief; life after loss

From News In Health

Losing someone you love can change your world. You miss the person who has died and want them back. You may feel sad, alone or even angry. You might have trouble concentrating or sleeping. If you were a busy caregiver, you might feel lost when you're suddenly faced with lots of unscheduled time. These feelings are normal. There's no right or wrong way to mourn. Scientists have been studying how we process grief and are learning more about healthy ways to cope with loss.

The death of a loved one can affect how you feel, how you act and what you think. Together, these reactions are called grief. It's a natural response to loss. Grieving doesn't mean that you have to feel certain emotions. People can grieve in very different ways.

Cultural beliefs and traditions can influence how someone expresses grief and mourns. For example, in some cultures, grief is expressed quietly and privately. In others, it can be loud

and out in the open. Culture also shapes how long family members are expected to grieve.

"People often believe they should feel a certain way," says Dr. Wendy Lichtenthal, a psychologist at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. "But such 'shoulds' can lead to feeling badly about feeling badly. It's hugely important to give yourself permission to grieve and allow yourself to feel whatever you are feeling. People can be quite hard on themselves and critical of what they are feeling. Be compassionate and kind to yourself."

Adapting to Loss

Experts say you should let yourself grieve in your own way and time. People have unique ways of expressing emotions. For example, some might express their feelings by doing things rather than talking about them. They may feel better going on a walk or swimming or by doing something creative, like writing or painting. For others, it may be more helpful to talk with family and friends about the person who's

gone or with a counselor.

"Though people don't often associate them with grief, laughing and smiling are also healthy responses to loss and can be protective," explains Dr. George Bonanno, who studies how people cope with loss and trauma at Columbia University. He has found that people who express flexibility in their emotions often cope well with loss and are healthier over time.

"It's not about whether you should express or suppress emotion, but that you can do this when the situation calls for it," he says. For instance, a person with emotional flexibility can show positive feelings, like joy, when sharing a happy memory of the person they lost and then switch to expressing sadness or anger when recalling more negative memories, like an argument with that person.

Grief is a process of letting go and learning to accept and live with loss. The amount of time it takes to do this varies with each person.

"Usually people experience a strong acute grief reaction when someone dies and at the same time they begin the gradual process of adapting to the loss," explains psychiatrist Dr. M. Katherine Shear at Columbia University. "To adapt to a loss, a person needs to accept its finality and understand what it means to them. They also have to find a way to re-envi-



NIH

Everyday objects can remind us of lost loved ones. Sometimes the memories bring us joy. Other times these happy memories are mixed with grief.

sion their life with possibilities for happiness and for honoring their enduring connection to the person who died."

Researchers like Lichtenthal have found that finding meaning in life after loss can help you adapt. Connecting to those things that are most important, including the relationship with the person who died, can

help you co-exist with the pain of grief.

Types of Grief

About 10 percent of bereaved people experience complicated grief, a condition that makes it harder for some people to adapt to the loss of a loved one. People with this prolonged, intense grief tend to get caught up in certain kinds of thinking, says Shear, who studies complicated grief. They may think the death did not have to happen or happen in the way that it did. They also might judge their grief—questioning if it's too little or too much—and focus on avoiding reminders of the loss.

"It can be very discouraging to experience complicated grief, but it's important not to be judgmental about your

grief and not to let other people judge you," Shear explains.

Shear and her research team created and tested a specialized therapy for complicated grief in three NIH-funded studies. The therapy aimed to help people identify the thoughts, feelings, and actions that can get in the way of adapting to loss. They also focused on strengthening one's natural process of adapting to loss. The studies showed that 70 percent of people taking part in the therapy reported improved symptoms. In comparison, only 30 percent of people who received the standard treatment for depression had improved symptoms.

See GRIEF, 21

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GRIEF

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You may begin to feel the loss of your loved one even before their death. This is called anticipatory grief. It's common among people who are long-term caregivers. You might feel sad about the changes you are going through and the losses you are going to have. Some studies have found that when patients, doctors and family members directly address the prospect of death before the loss happens, it helps survivors cope after the death.

Life Beyond Loss

NIH-funded scientists continue to study different aspects of the grieving process. They hope their findings will suggest new ways to help people cope with the loss of a loved one.

Although the death of a loved one can feel overwhelming, many people make it through the grieving process with the support of family and friends. Take care of yourself, accept offers of help from those around you and be sure to get counseling if you need it.

"We believe grief is a form of love and it needs to find a place in your life after you lose someone close," Shear says. "If you are having trouble moving forward in your own life, you may need professional help. Please don't lose hope. We have some good ways to help you."

GCHD Early Care Program



Submitted photo

OAKLAND — Joanne Roberts, community health nurse for the Garrett County Health Department Early Care Programs, provides home visits to Carrie Kisner, Patrick Schrock and their 2-month-old daughter, Micayla. Through Early Care Program services, Carrie and Patrick are able to receive in-home education from a nurse to promote child health and development, safety and overall family well-being. The family receives ongoing support and education regarding their child's physical, social and emotional development, as well as assistance in meeting personal goals to promote self-sufficiency. Early Care Programs provide voluntary home visitation services from a registered nurse and/or paraprofessionals that empower parents to give their child the best beginning in life. For more information on Early Care Program services call 301-334-7720.

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Getting it straight — improve your posture for better health

by News In Health

Sit up straight! This common request may have been how you first heard about posture, the way you hold your body. Posture isn't just about how you look. How you position yourself can help or hurt your health over your lifetime.

"Posture is not only about how well you sit, but how well you move and go about your daily life," says Dr. George Salem, an NIH-funded researcher at the University of Southern California who studies how movement affects health and quality of life.

How you hold yourself when you're not moving—such as when you're sitting, standing, or sleeping—is called static posture. Dynamic posture is how you position your body while you're moving, like walking or bending over to pick something up. "It's important to consider both static and dynamic components of posture," Salem says.

Posture can be affected by many things: your age, the situations you find yourself in, and your daily choices. For instance, children may have to adjust to carry heavy backpacks to school. Pregnant women move differently to accommodate growing babies.

Your posture involves your musculoskeletal system. This includes your bones, muscles, joints, and other tissues that connect the parts of your body together. It's what provides form, support, stability, and movement to your body.

How you hold yourself can either align or misalign your musculoskeletal system. Throughout life, this system must adapt to the type of work you do, the hobbies you enjoy, how you use electronic devices, injuries, and even the kind of shoes you wear.

You may think that sitting with slumped shoulders or bending at your back instead of your knees sometimes won't hurt you. But small changes in



NIH

Having bad posture may feel comfortable in the short term, but it can lead to long-term problems.

how you hold yourself and move can add up over a lifetime.

Years of slouching wears away at your spine to make it more fragile and prone to injury. Holding your body and moving in unhealthy ways often leads to neck, shoulder, and back pain. In any 3-month period, about 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. has at least 1 day of back pain.

Poor posture can also decrease your flexibility, how well your joints move, and your balance. It can impact your ability to do things for yourself and increase your risk for falls. Slumped posture can even make it more difficult to digest the food you eat and breathe comfortably.

Some research suggests a link between posture and mental health as well. "Someone with depression may

appear more closed in, curved, and tend to look down," says NIH physical therapist Dr. Cris Zampieri. "When people feel anxious, they may raise their shoulders." Scientists are now exploring the connections between posture and how we think and process information in the brain.

See POSTURE, 23

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POSTURE

(Continued from Page 22)

Our bodies change as we age. These natural changes make it especially important for older adults to maintain good posture, strength, flexibility, and balance. "Older adults tend to adopt a progressively hunched posture," says Salem. "When shoulders continue to round forward over time, it creates excessive loading on the shoulder joint. This can create injury and limit the independence of older adults."

An extremely hunched posture, or hyperkyphosis, affects up to two-thirds of senior women and half of senior men. This posture has been associated with back pain, weakness, and trouble breathing. It can also limit everyday activities, like brushing your hair and dressing yourself.

Salem and other researchers have been studying the possible health benefits of yoga, particularly for older adults. Yoga is a mind and body practice that typically combines physical postures, breathing exercises, and

meditation or relaxation. In one study, older adults with hyperkyphosis showed significant improvement and less rounded shoulders after a 6-month yoga program.

"More people are participating in yoga," Salem says. "We're using innovative tools — like motion analysis with high-speed cameras and platforms that measure force — to understand what yoga is actually doing and how it's targeting the biological processes of our body." Ultimately, Salem says these findings will help therapists and yoga instructors design programs that are safe and effective for older adults. The team also plans to study other age groups and people with disabilities.

It's never too early or late in life to work on improving your posture and how you move.

"One way to improve your posture is to be aware of it in the first place," Zampieri says. "It's important to take a look at your posture before it becomes a problem. Yoga, tai chi, and other types of classes that focus on body awareness and mindfulness can help you learn to feel what's wrong in your

own posture. They also help you connect your physical posture with your emotional state, offering benefits in both areas."

Classes aren't the only way to improve your posture. "Be mindful of your posture and how you're moving," Salem says. "Think about lifting your head, pulling your shoulders back, and tightening your abdominal muscles in everyday situations." Be aware of repetitive postures, like regularly lifting heavy objects, and holding positions for a long time, like sitting at a computer all day at work.

"If you spend a lot of time in front of a computer, make sure you have a good setup," says NIH physical therapist Dr. Jesse Matsubara. "It's important that your workstation fits you the best it can. You should also switch sitting positions often, take brief walks around the office, and gently stretch your muscles every so often to help relieve muscle tension."

The foundation of good posture is having a body that can support it. This means having strong abdominal and back muscles, flexibility, and a balanced

body over your life. Another way to improve posture is to lose weight, especially around your gut. More than 2 out of 3 Americans are either overweight or obese. Extra weight weakens your abdominal muscles, causes problems for your pelvis and spine, and contributes to low back pain.

"It's easy to develop sub-optimal movement patterns after an injury or from years of pain," Salem explains, "but people can learn to distribute their weight evenly and balance their bodies again."

It's important to work with a doctor to find the types of physical activity that can help you maintain your health and mobility. Talk to your health-care providers if you feel pain, have an injury, or have had surgery. They can give you feedback on how you're moving, help you avoid unhealthy movement patterns, and work with you to create a plan that's best for you.

RWJF

(Continued from Page 3)

Garrett County will receive a \$25,000 cash prize, joining a network of Prize-winning communities that have their inspiring accomplishments shared throughout the nation. The other seven winning communities are: Algoma, Wisconsin; Allen County, Kansas; Chelsea, Massachusetts; Richmond, Virginia; San Pablo, California; Seneca Nation of Indians in western New York; and Vicksburg, Mississippi.

To become an RWJF Culture of Health Prize winner, Garrett County had to demonstrate how it excelled in the following six criteria:

- Defining health in the broadest possible terms.
- Committing to sustainable systems changes and policy-oriented long-term solutions.
- Cultivating a shared and deeply-held belief in the importance of equal opportunity for health.
- Harnessing the collective power of leaders, partners, and

community members.

- Securing and making the most of available resources.

- Measuring and sharing progress and results.

"This prize comes as recognition of the fact that Garrett County thinks beyond the obvious," notes Bob Stephens, Garrett County Health Officer. "When we have challenges here, we look at how the community can respond, using our available resources. And when we have challenges that our resources can't necessarily address, we look at how to develop the resources we need. It's very gratifying to be named a Culture of Health Prize winner."

Garrett County joined this year's other prize winning communities at the Culture of Health Prize Celebration and Learning Event at Robert Wood Johnson Foundation headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey, on October 11-12.

Learn more about Garrett County's work, as well as this year's other prize winners, through a collection of videos, photos, and more at www.rwjf.org/Prize.

WELLNESS

(Continued from Page 8)

The Wellness at Work Awards are sponsored by Healthiest Maryland Businesses, the state's initiative to support healthy workplaces. Any Maryland employer who is a member of Healthiest Maryland Businesses is eligible to apply, and there is no cost to be a member. Recognition criteria are based on the CDC's Workplace Health Model, and applicants are asked to describe activities and share examples of policies and tools developed and utilized in the four areas of assessment, planning and management, implementation, and evaluation.

The Healthiest Maryland Businesses program was launched in 2010 and is based at Maryland Department of Health. Businesses receive assistance in creating customized wellness plans, setting wellness goals, and monitoring progress. Six regional coordinators provide personal-



Submitted photo

The Wisp was recently recognized as a Healthiest Maryland Businesses Wellness at Work Awardee in the Gold Award category, the highest award possible. Pictured above are Amy Ritchie and Sharon Custer, Garrett County Health Department, with Wisp Team: Lisa Wilson, Wanda Mayle, Shelly Carr, & Steve Yeash.

ized guidance to businesses of all sizes. To date, over 460 businesses have signed on to take advantage of this program.

In addition to The Wisp, GCC Technologies, and the Garrett County Health Department, other Garrett County businesses listed as Healthiest Maryland Businesses are: First United Bank & Trust, Lowe's, Naylor's Ace Hardware, Garrett

Regional Medical Center, Thrasher Engineering, and Total Biz Fulfillment, Inc.

To learn more about becoming a Healthiest Maryland Business, call Amy Ritchie at the Garrett County Health Department at 301-334-7730 or 301-895-3111. A complete list of recognized businesses can be found at www.healthiest-MDBusinesses.org/award-program.



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