



# Garrett County Department of Social Services

2012 Annual Report

## From our Director



As the Director of the Garrett County Department of Social Services, it is indeed my pleasure to present for your review the Garrett County Department of Social Services 2012 Annual Report.

2012 has been a busy year for myself and my staff as we continue to work vigorously to ensure that we provide only the highest quality of services to those whose lives are touched by our services and programs.

Just as the Governor, Legislature, and our Leadership at DHR search for solutions to Maryland's budgetary crisis and the ensuing challenges we, too, in Garrett County struggle. Although our struggles are linked they are different. We continue to move forward while working through shortages in funding, a significant increase in our case loads, and challenges unique to rural Garrett County. However, I can say with certainty that the staff of GCDSS in our Oakland Office and our Grantsville Office continue to utilize their collective wisdom, enthusiasm, and innovative nature to meet all challenges with initiate solutions.

The Agency's Advisory Board is a positive and valued advocate group providing insight into the unique needs of our community and customers. Members of the Agency's Advisory Board play a vital role, using their knowledge regarding Agency programs and services to provide a factual bridge of information between our Agency and the community. I would take this opportunity to thank the Garrett Co. Board of Commissioners and the GCDSS Advisory Board for their support and assistance in helping the Agency receive approval from DHR to back fill a vital Service position.

As Director of GCDSS, I value the continued support of an outstanding and dedicated staff. During these trying economic times, I set great store in DHR's leadership, knowledge, and cooperation. I continue to value the many and varied contributions of Local Government and community partnerships. My staff and I look forward to continuing our collaboration on behalf of the customers we serve and the community in which we live.

Sincerely,

*Rick DeWitt*, Director

### **Leadership Team**

**Rick DeWitt**  
Director

**Tamra Canfield**  
Assistant Director Services

**Tom Rosser**  
Assistant Director Family Investment  
Administration

**Phil Gillum**  
Assistant Director Child Support

**Alicia Streets**  
Assistant Director Administration

### **Advisory Board Members**

**Kim Durst, Chair**

**Barbara Baker, Vice-Chair**

**Heather Hanline, Secretary**

**Robert Gatto,**  
County Commissioner

**William Aspinall**

**Beverly Beard**

**Donna McClintock-Fost**

**Linda Green**

**Lt. Jeff Murphy**

**Suzanne Ryan**

**Sharon Teets**

## **Values**

**We value the effort, experience, knowledge, and professionalism of our employees to respond to the needs and deliver services to our customers. We value our employees' ability to inform our customers of the programs and services they are entitled and their obligation to actively participate in the process.**

**We value our partnerships with other community agencies that contribute to the delivery of service to our customers.**

**We value and respect our customers as individuals as we work together to improve the quality of their lives.**

## **Mission**

**We will aggressively pursue opportunities to assist Garrett County residents in economic need, increase prevention efforts, and protect vulnerable children and adults.**

## **Vision**

**We envision Garrett County residents living free from abuse and neglect while maximizing their potential for self-sufficiency.**

**Dedicated to: Prevention, Protection, and Self-sufficiency**

### **Customers of the Garrett County Department of Social Services have the following rights:**

- ◆ **To receive appropriate service (s).**
- ◆ **Services which are free from harm and mental, physical and sexual abuse/exploitation by staff.**
- ◆ **An impartial, timely grievance procedure, which affords you the ability to exercise your rights as described in the "Consumer Grievance Policy".**
- ◆ **To receive services in accordance with the applicable individualized Service Plans which conform to the rules and regulations which govern this Agency.**
- ◆ **To participate in the development and/or revision of their Service Plan.**
- ◆ **To receive in appropriate terms and language, explanation of the following:**
  - content and objectives of the Service Plan;**
  - nature and significance of any possible adverse effects caused by the Service Plan;**
  - name, title and role of personnel directly responsible for carrying out Service Plan;**
  - when appropriate, other available service providers.**
- ◆ **To privacy and confidentiality of services provided and records maintained.**
- ◆ **To access your Service Plan. If the Case Manager/Services worker responsible for your case determines access to your records would be harmful to you or other interested parties, that information will not be released. Release of information to other agencies can only be done with your written consent unless provided for by regulation.**
- ◆ **To an explanation, in appropriate terms and language usage, of any charges or fees that will be applied before receiving services from the Agency.**
- ◆ **Upon admission to services, to be informed in appropriate terms and language and through written policies by the prominent posting of the above rights.**

# Social Services Administration

## Child Protective Services

The Child Protective Services Unit continues to investigate cases and work on accreditation of our Child Advocacy Center (CAC) through the National Children's Alliance (NCA).

CAC meetings are held monthly with participation by all parties involved with our cases. Dr. Richard Porter, forensic nurse Heather Cooper, State's Attorney Lisa T. Welch, and law enforcement add valuable input to our case staffings. At these meetings, active cases and strategies for better outcomes are discussed.

This year a grant received from the Governor's Office of Crime Control and prevention, specifically for Child Advocacy Centers, will be used to send a multi-disciplinary team to a national conference. The conference will focus on, Crimes Against Children, and will help us to better serve the vulnerable children in Garrett County.

GCDSS recently signed a new multi-agency working agreement concerning protocols in child abuse investigations. This agreement has been forwarded to the Maryland State police for processing by their legal unit. It is hoped that the agreement will be returned and signed by September 2012.

GCDSS recently hired Missy Orr who joins the agency as a VOCA therapist to provide counseling to children and families who are victims of sexual and physical abuse. Ms. Orr is currently working with a caseload of 12 families and their children. Another facet of Ms. Orr's duties will include coordinating the GC CAC activities and meetings.

Garrett Co. CAC will continue to work towards full accreditation. Accreditation will enhance our ability to apply for additional grant funding and resources to augment our services to children and families.

## In-Home Family Services

The Garrett County In-Home Family Service Programs (IHFS) purpose is to promote the safety and well-being of children and their families; to preserve family unity when children's safety can be supported; to maintain permanency for children; and to empower families to achieve or sustain independence and self-sufficiency. The program's goals include enhancing the parents' ability to create a safe, stable, and nurturing home environment that promotes healthy child development; preventing out-of-home placement of children when safety can be promoted to a sufficient proportion; and providing, referring, and coordinating services needed to achieve or maintain family safety, stability, independence, and unity.

Michael Dennis has recently taken over the supervision of the IHFS unit. Ms. Sabrina Shaffer the social worker for continuing CPS left the Agency to pursue other career opportunities and her former position has been filled by Ms. Amanda Richardson. Welcome Amanda.

The Garrett County Department of Social Services provides a continuum of service programs designed to achieve the purpose and goals of In-Home Family Services and to meet the needs of individual families.

The IHFS unit provides services to about 48 families per month and is accredited by the National Council on Accreditation, in New York.



# Social Services Administration

## **Foster Care & Adoption**

The Garrett County Foster Care/Adoption Program provides a temporary, out-of-home placement for children whose biological families are experiencing difficulties in parenting and/or supervision. Placement of children occurs within the context of licensed foster families, treatment foster homes, group homes, and residential treatment centers. The goal of the program is to provide high quality case management services and to secure a safe permanent living arrangement for each child as soon as possible. The Garrett County Foster Care/Adoption Program has seen the number of children in care rise from an average of 32-33 per month to 53 per month with about half of those children being teenagers in long-term foster care. The Garrett County Foster Care/Adoption Program is very pleased that 31 children were reunited with their families this past year.

**Regular Foster Care** - provides services to vulnerable children from birth to age 21. In FY 2011, the program provided services to 83 children. The length of stay for children in the program declined following new legislation and with due diligence from GCDSS staff to pursue permanent placement for cases of children in care for 15 months. Nearly all foster families are being “dually” licensed which means they will provide foster care as well as adopt. This has aided in the increasing number of finalized adoptions in the County.

**Semi-Independent Living** – provides services to youths in foster care who are 16 years or older and who will be emancipated upon reaching adulthood. The purpose of this program is to assist youth with life skills, educational advancement, career planning, employment, and money management skills. These skills will prepare these foster children for success as adults. The goal of this program is to teach skills that are vital for self-sufficiency.

**Ready by 21**—Maryland law has allowed foster children to remain in the child welfare system until they reach 21 years of age. Consequently, the Department of Human Resources has adopted a *Ready by 21* action plan to support the successful transition of youth aging out of the child welfare system. This

program targets foster youth ages 14-20. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, Garrett County served 32 youth over the age of 14. This represents approximately half of the children served in foster care in Garrett County. At the end of the FY, 21 of the youth served continued to be in this program. However, during the FY, 8 youth achieved permanency either through reunification or placement with a relative, while 3 youth successfully transitioned into adulthood. In preparing to turn 21, caseworkers jointly enter into a transitional plan to ensure that youth acquire skills and overcome barriers to completing school, obtaining and maintaining gainful employment, finding adequate and affordable housing, financial literacy, self care, and accessing health and mental health care. In serving these youth, caseworkers ensure that prior to the age of 21, youth are connected to a family member or caring adult prior to exiting foster care.

**Treatment Foster Care** – Due to the loss of positions in the Foster Care program, the Treatment Foster Care program came to an end this year. Our youth are now referred to PRYDE, which operates in Garrett County.

**Kinship Care** – provides services to extended family members meeting the needs of children accepted for care through the foster care program. Placement of foster children with an extended family member has significantly increased and is preferred if removal from the biological family is imminent.

**Adoption** – licenses and matches adoptive homes with waiting children through the Maryland Adoption Resource Exchange Program (M.A.R.E.). GCDSS finalized 5 adoptions in 2012 exceeding the goal of 3 set by the State. In addition, GCDSS has partnered with other counties to find suitable families for waiting children.



# Social Services Administration

## **Adult Protective Services**

Garrett County DSS continues to provide quality services to the adult population through voluntary, as well as mandated, programs. Vulnerable adults who have been mistreated, exploited, or have placed themselves at risk receive services under the Adult Protective Services Program (APS). All APS reports are screened by the Assistant Director and the lead APS worker prior to assignment for investigation. If allegations of abuse, self-neglect, or exploitation or neglect by others are proven valid, services are provided to prevent further harm or institutionalization. Of the 70 investigations completed in Fiscal Year 2012, 57 were self-neglect, 11 were neglect by others, 1 was financial exploitation, and 1 was physical abuse.

Educational workshops on APS and Domestic Violence were provided to professionals and members of the community in the previous year. Garrett County DSS purchased several videos that could be used by local agencies and the community for educational purposes. Content of the tapes included how to recognize the stages of Alzheimer's Disease and how to effectively deal with this progressive disease.

**Social Services to Adults (SSTA)** – is a voluntary program for disabled and elderly adults who may be in need of financial, medical, social, or psychological assistance. Customers may also be in need of, and/or eligible for, In-Home Aid Services (IHAS). Chore services are provided to help prevent institutionalization. The goal is to enable customers to remain in their community in the least restrictive manner so that their needs are met.

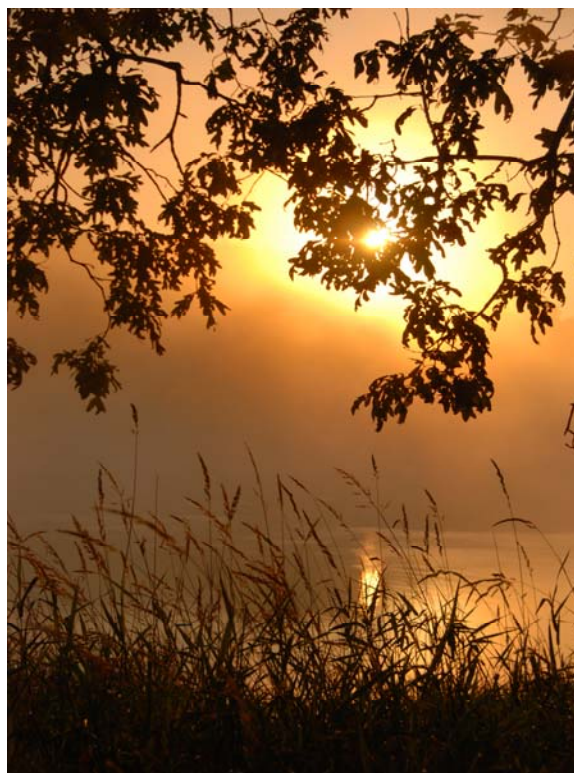
Customer safety is very important while services are being delivered. Customers may be referred to a step-up program, such as APS; or, they may be stepped-down from APS to SSTA/IHAS.

The APS and Social Services to Adults Programs have seen an increase in referrals due to community

knowledge, increased need, and our customers are living longer. Although there was an increase in referrals, our average caseload size decreased slightly during the winter, due to a State-imposed moratorium. The moratorium lasted until May of 2010. Approximately 203 customers were served monthly by the Garrett Co. DSS Adults Services Unit. The Department collaborates with the local Area Agency on Aging, the Health Department, and the local Core Service Agency to meet the needs of customers in the most efficient and effective manner.

**Project Home** – has one certified home serving four customers. The Agency's goal is to provide assistance to customers in the least restrictive setting with a homelike atmosphere. These individuals attend the local Adult Day Care Program and receive socialization skill enhancement.

All Adult, APS, Project Home, and Guardianship programs are accredited by the National Council on Accreditation in New York.



# Family Investment Administration

The Family Investment Program (FIP) provides Medical Assistance, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly Food Stamp, Purchase of Care (Child Care Subsidy), Temporary Cash Assistance to Families, Temporary Cash Assistance to Disabled Adults, Long Term Care (Medical Assistance for Nursing Home residents), Public Assistance to Adults and Job Readiness, Placement, and Retention services. Family Investment is segmented into four interdependent units, two teams of Case Managers, Garrett WORKS (work opportunities) and Clerical Support.

Benefits issued by Family Investment are based both on technical and financial criteria as determined by Federal, State, and local policies. Garrett’s Family Investment Unit has exceeded the state and federal goal for error rate in all Family Investment programs for eight years running. On July 25, 2012 DHR FIA Executive staff will travel to Garrett Co. to award the FIA staff the Golden Fork Award. GCDSS will be one of three agencies statewide to have earned this award. The award recognizes high performance at a combination of test taking, application compliance and supervisory reviews.

During the last state fiscal year, the Food Stamp caseload continued to increase, with a jump of 2% more cases this year over last. The Food Stamp caseload now stands higher than our past record in 1994 (the end of the last recession). The Community Medical Assistance caseload remained the same. Long Term Care (Nursing Home) Medical Assistance increased by 72%. The size of this caseload is dependent upon the number of nursing home beds in the county, as well as residents who qualify. TDAP, a small program that provides cash assistance to disabled adults, increased by 20%.

The TCA caseload increased by 6%. The continued

increase in most of our core programs, SNAP and TCA, combined with stationary caseload numbers in our other programs, is an indicator of the extent of the current economic recovery and its affect on Garrett citizens. Although the caseload change is not as dramatic as at the height of the recession, the trend remains upward.

Garrett WORKS has a particularly challenging job in light of current circumstances. The strenuous work program requirements to qualify for TCA still discourage many applicants. Garrett WORKS helps customers find and retain employment. Jobs skills enhancement offers help for working customers to improve their skills and advance their careers. Thru June 2012 Garrett WORKS met our job placement goal of 40. Garrett County has reached a monthly Universal Engagement average of 100%, and a Work Participation Rate of 73%, which leads the state.

“Wheels to Work,” one of our most successful work programs, allowing working customers to purchase or fix their used vehicles with low-cost loans. During fiscal year 2012, the program placed or repaired 5 vehicles. Wheels to Work is a partnership program between Garrett County Department of Social Services and Garrett County Community Action. Unfortunately, funding for this program remains reduced for SFY ’13. The program continues to operate with money from the loan fund, which is insufficient to cover the long-term continuation of the program.

Family Investment met or exceeded all performance measures set by DHR, as well as those set in our own strategic plan, for SFY 2012. Wage at placement is currently \$8.86 per hour. This is related directly to Garrett’s economy.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	GOAL	ACTUAL
Application Processing Compliance		
Regular Applications	97%	100%
Expedited Food Stamps	100%	100%
Food Stamp Error Rate	Below 6.0%	0.0%
TCA Error Rate	Below 3%	0%
MA Error Rate	Below 3%	2%
TCA Job Placements	40	40 as of 7/1/12
Job Retention	70%	73%
Earnings Gain Rate	40%	44%
Work Participation Rate	50%	73%

# Family Investment Administration

The largest caseload handled by Family Investment continues to be the Medical Assistance caseload. 22.5% of Garrett County's population participated in some kind of Medical Assistance program during 2012. This remains the third largest percentage of the general population that relies on Medical Assistance of the 24 jurisdictions in Maryland, behind only Worcester County and Baltimore City.

The Child Care Subsidy Program had a wait list for customers imposed effective February 1, 2011. It remains in place, with 54 children currently on the wait list. As of July 2012 the POC caseload stood at 36 children.

Family Investment continues to provide services to needy customers through Emergency Assistance for utilities, housing and Burial Assistance. \$50,337 was approved during SFY '12. For next year, the state has reduced this program to once every two years for customers.



## FY 12 Statistics

Temporary Cash Assistance to families	Recipients	220
Temporary Emergency Medical and Housing Temporary Cash Assistance to disabled adults	Recipients/Cases	78
Public Assistance to Adults	Recipients/Cases	6
Purchase of Care (POC)	Children	36
Food Stamps	Recipients	4438
Medical Assistance-Community	Recipients	4405
Medical Assistance-Long Term Care (Nursing Homes)	Recipients	255



# Local General Administration

The Local General Administration (LGA) is responsible for numerous support functions including the Finance Office and Administration. The Finance Office is responsible for all financial operations including accounting and budgeting. Administration is responsible for personnel, procurement, inventory, fleet, network, and facilities management.

## LGA Unit Outcomes for Fiscal Year 2012

### Outcomes

Effectively used resources to meet agency needs without deficit spending.

Limited resources were used to meet core mission and achieve agency goals.

The fiscal year was closed with no deficits.

Collaborated with programs and community partners to institute and enhance strategic planning initiatives. DHR/OIG Routine Audit conducted resulting in minimal audit findings for the department.

Decreased network downtime and increased productivity.

Streamlined fiscal processes to gain efficiencies in operations.

Successfully obtained the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Grant and the GOCCP Child Advocacy Center Grant.

Maximized personnel resources to better implement best practices and streamline customer service by implementing an online employee handbook.



## Child Support Enforcement

The Child Support Enforcement Unit of GCDSS plays an important role in carrying out the Agency's goal of assisting customers in becoming self-sufficient.

Since 1999 the Bureau of Support Enforcement (BOSE) has been speaking to 9th graders at the local high schools about their growing responsibilities, budgets, and reality of paying child support. This message has been presented to approximately 5,600 students since the beginning of the program. Student feedback indicates that this program has and continues to be enthusiastically received.

### Child Support Services Include

- ◆ Locating non-custodial parents
- ◆ Collection and distribution of payments—The GCDSS Child Support Unit collected and distributed over \$2,000,000 in FY 2012.

- ◆ Obtaining a court order for child support and medical insurance
- ◆ Enforcement of court orders—The GCDSS Child Support Unit has met or exceeded the State Stat goal for establishing court orders and paternity
- ◆ Review and adjustment of court orders

Paternity Establish Services are available through genetic testing and an In-Hospital Paternity program.

There are a number of administrative tools for enforcing court orders that include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Drivers License Suspension
- ◆ New Hire Reporting
- ◆ Automatic Earnings Withholding
- ◆ Interception of Federal and State Tax Refunds

## “The Blake Meyers Eagle Scout Project Fund”



Pictured above: from left, are Ray Uphold, Assistant Scout Master, GC Commissioner Bob Gatto, GCDSS Director Rick DeWitt, Blake, James Meyers (Blake's father) Troop 49 Scout Master, Rebecca Meyers, Blake's Mother, and GC Commissioner James Raley

Blake Meyers, a 14 year old sophomore at Northern High School and Life Scout in Boy Scout Troop # 49 of Grantsville contacted the Garrett County DSS foster care supervisor in November of 2010. Blake had begun researching his Eagle Scout Project and learned that as children transitioned through the foster care system, they often moved about with their possessions being transported in nothing more than plastic garbage bags. Blake hoped that by doing some fund raising, he would be able to purchase duffel bags/ luggage, complete with travel case, tooth brush and tooth paste. Blake hoped that by simply providing something that these children could call their own it would in some small way help to raise their self esteem as they made the transition into foster care.

Over the next 16 months, Blake work tirelessly and was able with the support and encouragement of his parents James (also his Scout Master) and Rebecca to raise over \$7,000 for his Eagle Scout Project. Blake and his committee put together fifty "travel kits" for Garrett County Foster Children. Blake gave over \$6,000 of the remaining donations to be used to perpetuate the fund and to finance future purchases. Blake gives credit to a generous community and to individuals whose donations simply arrived in the mail. Blake stated that he was amazed by the generosity of those who gave.

The Garrett Co. DSS is very pleased with the approval of Blake and his parents to honor his selfless efforts to improve the self esteem, sense of dignity and quality of life of foster children by naming the fund "**The Blake Meyers Eagle Scout Project Fund.**" Blake presented the travel kits to GCDSS in a ceremony held at the GCDSS Grantsville Center on February 28, 2012.

# GCDSS is committed to providing only the highest quality services to our customers and community.

## GCDSS Customer Service Award Recipient Dora Hanlin



Dora provides quiet, calming attention to her customers needs daily. Dora coordinates and facilitates the Agency’s Christmas help for customers – Toys for Tots and Rotary Food & Toy Baskets.

During a time of rising caseloads, Dora is the main driver of the Agency’s Christmas project. She carefully stretches resources to make sure all customers in need were served. The program served over 450 families. Dora has been in charge of this program for the Agency for over 15 years.

Pictured: DHR Secretary Ted Dallas, Dora Hanlin, and GCDSS Director Rick DeWitt



GCDSS in collaboration with Garrett County Public Safety coordinated a training exercise on to organize an emergency mobile trailer. The trailer was purchased with funding from a grant written by the Garrett County Planner utilizing Homeland Security funds. The cots and blankets were also purchased with this funding. This trailer will allow GCDSS to keep a standing inventory of basic shelter needs so that in case of an emergency the Agency will be able to respond quickly and effectively to any event requiring sheltering.

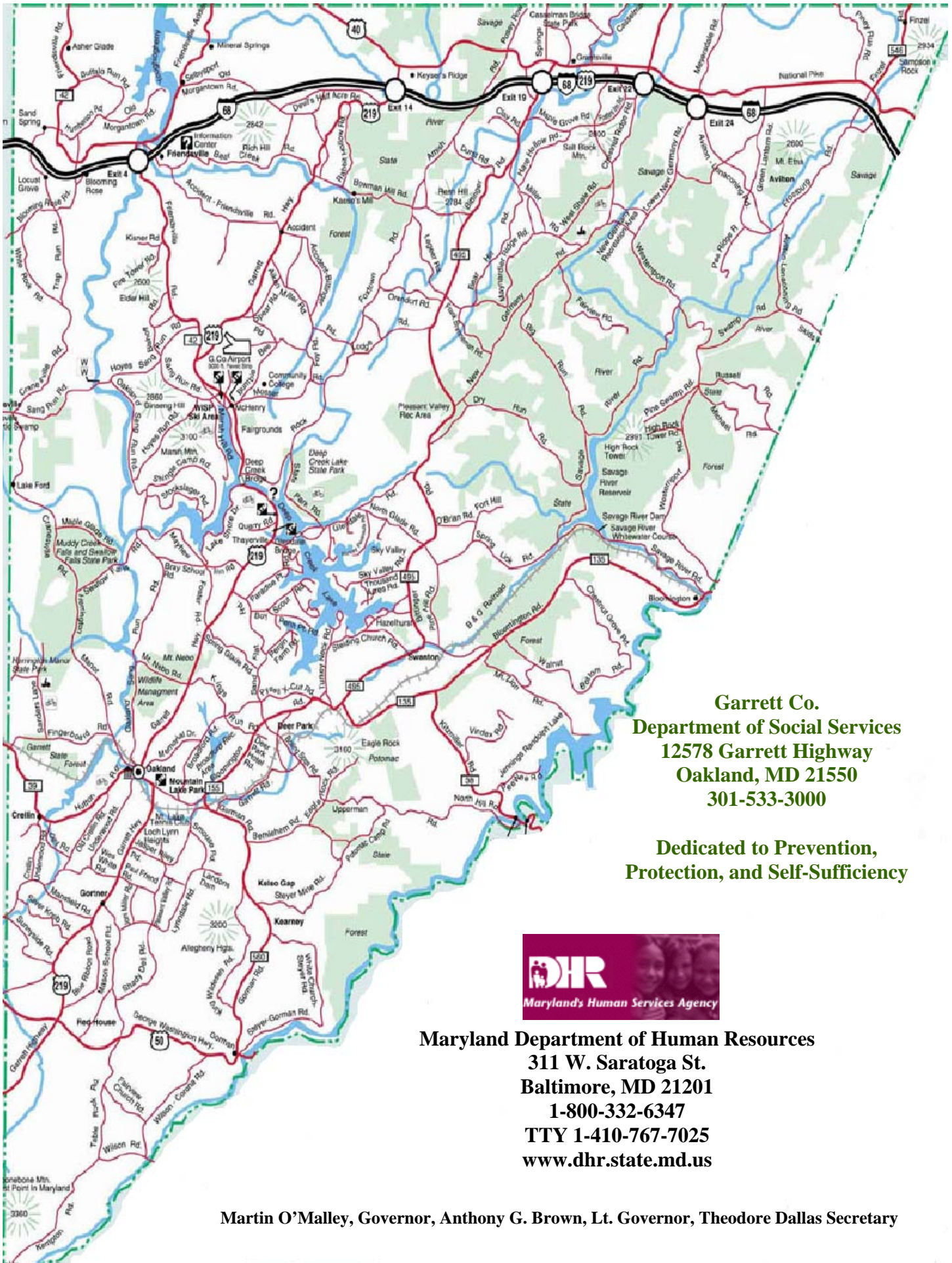
The exercise to organize the trailer and supplies was a pre-service training leading up to a full-scale hazmat exercise scenario that will be conducted in the fall of 2012 involving multiple response agencies within the county. GCDSS will stand up a mock shelter during that drill and test the plans we have in place.

On Alzheimer's Action Day, Garrett County Department of Social Services' staff wore purple to show their support for the battle against Alzheimer's. The more support and encouragement received, the better chances are of someday living in a world without Alzheimer's.



33 staff from Garrett County Department of Social Services joined thousands of people from all over the country to wear their favorite pair of jeans and raise millions of dollars in the fight against breast cancer. (not all participants are pictured)





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**Dedicated to Prevention,**  
**Protection, and Self-Sufficiency**



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**Martin O'Malley, Governor, Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor, Theodore Dallas Secretary**