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Hillsdale, Mich.

HILLSDALE — Maxine Vanlerberg, Hillsdale County director for the Community Action Agency, recently updated the Hillsdale County Commissioners on the clients served by the

agency.

The local CAA was founded in 1965 and features over 50 programs to assist families and promote family stabilization within the community. The local agency is funded by federal and state monies.

“We try to educate residents on the regular skills they need for life,” Vanlerberg said.

As of the first quarter of 2015, CAA had served 3,739 unduplicated residents representing 1,597 Hillsdale County families. There was about a 50-percent split between male and female clients served. The majority between the age of 24-44.

Of the 1,386 families who responded, 543 were single persons.

Vanlerberg said the majority of those that they serve have a high school diploma or higher education.

During the 2015 school year, 216 preschool children were enrolled in CAA’s Head Start, blended or Great Start Readiness Program. The CAA also served 87 children (0-3 years of age) through the Early Head Start Program.

To close out the school year, CAA hosted its end of the year picnic.

Vanlerberg said over 600 people attended the picnic this year.

She said this is a chance for people to come out and see the services that are offered by CAA.

During March is Reading Month, several county representatives took time to read to children in the program.

The CAA recently started two new programs — the "Proud Fathers" program and the "Getting Ahead" program.

The Proud Fathers program is a 13-week program for fathers, which includes activities in nurturing children and ourselves, fathering sons, fathering daughters, discipline without violence, play, managing anger, resolving conflict, teamwork with spouses/partner, communication, problem solving, balancing work and fathering, cultural influences, dealing with feelings and non-threatening sharing environment.

The Getting' Ahead program will begin this fall. The program, started in Lenawee County a few years ago, features 13 classes. The classes research the causes of poverty, examine stages of change, explore resources and create individual plans with specific steps to reach goals.

In closing, Hillsdale County Commissioner John Burtka recognized Vanlerberg and her staff for the job they are doing.

For more information on the programs offered by the CAA, visit www.caajlh.org.