

# Rotarians receive primer on CAPPAs goals

By MIKE REUTHER

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It's a place for kids to go, meet, have fun and also learn.

That is the essence of CAPPAs, a comprehensive youth intervention and development project created for the area's youth, many of them from troubled backgrounds.

Loni Gamble, executive director of the Community Alliance for Progressive Positive Action program, shared highlights with Williamsport Rotary members on Monday.

CAPPAs happens, he said, with the cooperation of school districts, volunteers and organizations such as Rotary.

Some 150 youths participate in the Saturday program held at The Center, he said.

The program's focus, he said, is to help youths achieve academic excellence, although other programs are offered, partly as an inducement to get youths involved in CAPPAs.

"These kids don't have to get out of bed to come to this on Saturdays," he said.

Basketball and performing arts are part of CAPPAs, as many youths are eager to embrace such activities.

But while many of those same youths may shine in basketball or dance, they also have the chance to become stars in the classroom.

Eileen Harley, CAPPAs academic support coordinator, said college students serve as volunteer tutors to help kids with mathematics and English skills.

"We hope to develop a love for learning," she said.

Gamble presented a short film which included testimonials from CAPPAs participants and local educators regarding the program's success.

Sheridan Elementary School



MIKE REUTHER/Sun-Gazette

## Loni Gamble shares highlights of the Community Alliance for Progressive Positive Action's programs and goals.

Principal Paul Daniels noted the difficulty some students have in believing in themselves.

He said that many come to CAPPAs for a specific activity while still taking advantage of the tutoring.

Cochran Elementary School Principal David J. Michaels said CAPPAs allows kids to connect and be part of something.

Curtin Middle School Principal Brandon S. Pardoe said students learn real life skills.

"Pretty much the sky's the limit," he said.

Dr. Laurie Cannady, assistant professor of English at Lock Haven University, noted that as a person who grew up in the inner city without a father, she can understand the importance of a program such as CAPPAs.

"These kids need this to help accomplish things," she said.

She said society should never

give up on its children.

Gamble noted that a hip hop rap component was introduced to CAPPAs to draw more boys, who were otherwise turned off by dance and other performing arts aspects of the program.

"We went from seven to 35 boys," he said.

But the foundation of CAPPAs, Harley said, is the academic support it provides kids.

Gamble said he promotes the program by going to schools and speaking to its benefits.

Groups such as the Rotary provide financial support.

Support also comes from the Williamsport Area School District, including opening up Cochran Elementary School's computer lab to kids.

Following his presentation, Gamble was named Non-Rotarian of the Year by Alan Demel, Williamsport Rotary first vice president.