



Members of the United Way of Mercer County take notes during the sixth annual economic summit.

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# Investing in kids can pay off

Summit focuses on schools' role in preventing poverty

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Lifting Families Out of Poverty



HERMITAGE – The 15 kids that made up the first class of the Success by Six program sponsored by the United Way of Mercer County are all set to graduate in 2017.

That's proof that the six-week program for pre-kindergarten children works. Success by Six is a collaborative effort among United Way,

Head Start and area school districts.

The United Way honored some volunteers in the program at the agency's sixth annual economic summit, held Friday morning at Artman Elementary School in

Hermitage.

Investing in children was the subject of the summit. "I'm not sure you really understand the impact of what you do," lawyer Jarrett Whalen told community leaders in the crowd, including

educators, county and state legislators and people in the health-care field. "I grew up in the slums of Sharon. If it weren't for the intervention

See **SUMMIT**, page A-2

## Makeover coming for food nutriti

	Today		Sun.	
	Hi/Lo	W	Hi/Lo	W
Age	53/45	r	59/48	c
City	58/51	r	67/49	c
	72/51	pc	57/53	r
	66/52	sh	70/50	c
ston, SC	86/64	t	79/57	pc
lati	67/50	pc	74/49	s
ind	63/48	pc	67/47	s
ous	64/46	sh	71/45	s
	87/69	pc	85/71	pc
	80/49	pc	72/43	pc
	89/66	s	87/63	s
	68/48	pc	71/48	s

City	83/58	t	83/54	t
y	59/44	r	59/50	sh
	74/56	pc	61/48	r
	79/55	s	76/57	pc

s-cloudy, sh-showers, v, i-ice.

are today's highs and tonight's lows.



# Summit

## Summit focuses on preventing poverty

FROM PAGE A-1

of Sharon schools and the programs they hooked me up with, I'd still be down there doing crack and doing coke."

As part of the United Way's poverty initiative started two years ago, the agency is looking for community collaboration to help families make their way out of financial straits.

"We don't expect to do it alone," said Sharon Sorg, chairman of the poverty initiative committee. "We expect everyone to do their part. What we anticipate is bringing all of the resources together and bringing the people together to make this happen."

Another collaboration between the United Way and local school districts that is just starting to take shape is a pilot pro-

gram for 3- and 4-year-olds.

"It's a chance to get some kids that aren't in preschool or Head Start and give them a chance to get in school, and spend some time with the parents also," said Hermitage schools Superintendent Dr. Daniel Bell. "To work on early literacy and work with numbers."

That program is limited to 15 students but slots in the Artman program are still open, Bell said.

Keynote speaker for the summit was Dr. George Garrow, chief medical officer of Primary Health Network. He outlined poverty statistics in the county, the state and the country and spoke about the impact of poverty on childhood health.

He listed programs that have helped children succeed, naming WIC - Women, Infants and Children, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and the National School Lunch Program among others.



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**Dr. George Garrow, chief medical officer at Primary Health Network, addresses United Way of Mercer County's sixth annual economic summit on early childhood investment.**

Garrow advised community leaders to invest in those types of programs which will in turn protect children's health.

"We need to find opportunities to protect the health of children in poverty," Garrow said.

Programs started under the United Way umbrella through community partnerships have gained traction over the years.

"There are programs in this area that I was never aware of," Sorg said. "I never knew how many good people with good intentions are helping people in their own way and making an impact. But imagine the impact we can make together."

One of the newer programs is the Financial Literacy Program.

"The community is blessed with a number of area banks who have all pulled together under the United Way umbrella and created a financial literacy program," Sorg said. "People will learn how to take their tiny resources and make them go as far as they possibly can."

Other successful programs in which volunteers would be welcomed with open arms cover such issues as transportation, affordable housing, teaching young adults a trade and helping women with prenatal issues.

"Eliminating poverty - it can be done," Garrow said.