

## Loudoun Campus Student Services Staff Retreat



*The Loudoun Campus Student Services staff pose for a group picture. Back row (left to right): Shannon Nieves, Frank DeLeon, Clint Young, Dorothy Richardson, Carlita McCombs, Kirk A. Nooks, Titus Lane, Payam Nikouei, Susan Nieves-Campos, Emily Bohr, Vicki Baron and Ngoc-Tuyen T. Nguyen. Second row: MaryEllen Williams, Kellee Lalliberty, Tiffney Laing, Alison McElfresh, Velderine (Faye) Alvarez and Gert Heslin. Front center: Renee McLaurin.*

Loudoun Campus Dean of Student Services **Kirk A. Nooks**, tapped **Michael Van Dyke** of Serengeti Enterprises, to put together some all-day teambuilding activities for Student Services staff members. Serengeti Enterprises (<http://www.serengetienterprises.net>) is an organization that provides coaching to improve leadership and teamwork skills for individuals and within organizations. Van Dyke regularly offers continuing education classes here. The retreat was held outside the LR building on the Loudoun Campus. The goals were to strengthen communications, to cultivate trust and openness, to become aware and value peer contributions and to encourage a climate for mutual support. In one exercise, all the staff members (about 20) boarded an imaginary raft (a tarp about 4'x 5') in order to flip the tarp over without any staff member falling off into the piranha infested waters. While there were no survivors, the staff learned how to step back from the big picture to look at problems in different ways when solving them.

Other activities involved getting across a rope that was placed about four feet off of the ground maintaining contact with the person who went ahead of you at all times. Ultimately, the goal of this exercise was to have all staff keep that connection. If at any point someone in the group lost contact, the activity would

**Continued on page 5**

## Loudoun Campus Student Services Staff Retreat

Continued from page 4

have to start over from the beginning (which happened a couple of times before it was finally done right). The second task was a great opportunity for the group to practice what they had learned in the first activity.

Some of the activities highlighted factors that could interfere with good teamwork. In one of the activities, the student services team broke into four groups, and each group was given a basket of unique balls to throw into a container at the center of the circle. As several teams started working competitively against the other teams to get more of their "own" balls in, they became aware of how inter-departmental competitiveness might interfere with the collective department goal of getting as much into the central zone as possible, regardless of which team they originated. As the day progressed, with each activity and each new insight, the team became better and more skillful. By the end of the day, they were a much more finely tuned NOVA Loudoun Survivor Student Services Team.



*Loudoun Student Services Division staff work as a team to solve problems and grow as individuals and as a division.*