

CORE PROGRAM

My 2010 LM Experience

By Richard S. Madaleno ('10), Chair of the Montgomery Senate Delegation and District 18 Senator

Last fall, with 48 fascinating individuals from around our County representing every sector of work and play, I embarked on a journey of discovery. For many years, I carefully tried to avoid Esther Newman's annual plea to participate in Leadership Montgomery's Core program. I attended the graduation dinners and was a regular speaker at the program day in Annapolis but could never quite make the commitment for a full year. Finally, I could stand the guilt no longer, especially when Esther found effective surrogates to track me down and turn up the pressure. Now that the program year has come to an end, I can honestly ask, "Why didn't I do this years ago?"

For years, I had heard tales of the fall retreat and the legend of Eliot Pfanstiehl. As customary, the retreat started with the story of how our individual journeys had brought us to Montgomery County. Over the years, many of us had called several communities around the County home, while others had deep roots in one place. Our group included lifelong residents, as well as some newcomers who do not remember a time before the InterCounty Connector. Not surprising, our residential map had most of the "early" settlers clustered inside the safety of the Beltway. But later years (was it the 1980's?) would bring many more to the two "official" development corridors. Clearly, this class represented every corner of the County and even beyond.

Following the retreat, our shared journey

would resume literally as the core program took us on outings to interesting and sometimes even exhilarating places around the County and introduced us to truly amazing people who are reshaping, reinventing, growing, protecting, and entertaining our County every day. We were educated about our County's history - something did actually happen here before World War II. We learned from people who are protecting our past while finding ways to weave it into our 21st Century lives. We were informed of the issues facing planners and developers as they lay out a vision for the future. We experienced the challenge of those who protect us day and night in the police, fire, and correctional services. We endured contentious County Council hearings and tedious but enlightening Planning Board briefings. We grew in appreciation of those who once lived here, as well as those who will shape the future. We faced down snow, legislators, and lobbyists in Annapolis. We learned from those who we entrust to teach our children. Finally, we played together with artists who bring vitality and wonder to our lives.

Now this journey comes to an end. A few weeks ago, we gathered again, this time for the closing retreat and a fond farewell to our group and this wonderful experience. As with every one of the LM program days, we enjoyed fellowship, humor and personal reflection. However, our journey has certainly not ended. I know I have formed new relationships with

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people who will lead our County through the next few years and decades. I have seen new connections develop and new paths traveled. While we face many difficult challenges together as a County over the next few months and years, I am more confident that our best days are still ahead as a result of this experience and of the remarkable role Leadership Montgomery plays within the fabric of our community. As we all learned this year, we are truly surrounded by geniuses.

