

"Federation Corner" column  
The Montgomery Sentinel - July 24, 2003

### **Introducing the Federation Corner column**

by Cary Lamari  
MCCF President

Residents of Montgomery County too often find themselves wondering how and when they can express their viewpoints so they can influence public policy, especially when their perspective differs from that of their elected officials. We often find in our democratic society that we do not have the voice we thought and were told we had when we were growing up. Political influence of special interest groups persuades many areas of our community (in certain influential newspapers, and in government agencies such as the Park and Planning Commission and the Board of Appeals).

Too often we find it difficult for our voices to be heard on issues of importance to us, especially when our viewpoints interfere with the political agenda of the day. These barriers have hampered the ability of individual residents and communities to have their fair say on many county government proposals that impact their lives, such as new roads and other transportation solutions, special exceptions, new housing developments, and the new political catch-all word now being used to promote more growth and development in Montgomery County, "affordable housing."

I believe that our sincerity should enable us to find middle ground on many of the proposed solutions affecting our lives, but only if residents are given a fair opportunity to be heard. The Sentinel Newspapers have offered the Montgomery County Civic Federation an opportunity to correct this imbalance by providing us with this voice, thus enabling us to present the concerns of our communities and neighbors affected by these policies.

In 1925, residents concerned with the direction of Montgomery County created the Montgomery County Civic Federation to promote ethical, fiscal, and legal accountability of the elected officials representing our county, and to ensure that their decisions enhance the quality of life for all county residents. The viewpoints that will be expressed in this newly created Federation Corner may not necessarily be those adopted by the Federation. This space will serve as an open forum for the opinions of residents on quality-of-life issues that they deal with on a day-to-day basis, such as educational inequities, overdensification of our neighborhoods, crime, mental health, campaign contributions and the perception of corruption, and a spectrum of other areas of public policy.

I would like to thank the Sentinel Newspapers for providing our affiliated community organizations with this weekly opportunity to present their concerns. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column should contact the Federation Corner column liaison to the Sentinel, Montgomery County Civic Federation delegate Alyce Ortuzar.