

"Federation Corner" column
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A snapshot of the Civic Federation

by Peggy Dennis
MCCF Immediate Past President

This June marked the end of my tenure as President of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, and I was sorry to step down. Many people seem to think that serving as president of a volunteer organization is something to be avoided, but I have found it both an honor and a pleasure to represent the Federation. It has given me the opportunity to do many exciting things.

During my MCCF presidency I organized the first ever Montgomery County Bicycling Conference and later went with my husband on a "VIP" bike tour from Bethesda to Silver Spring. When county officials were debating the proposal to merge the Park Police with the Montgomery County Police Department, I spent a day on a "ride-along" with a Park Police officer and learned so much about the particular public safety issues facing the Parks Department.

I spent an afternoon in our Circuit Court attending a session of "drug court" to see how this area of law enforcement is creatively handled. And I sat in on a session of the Zoning Advisory Panel to observe how this group of volunteers is contributing to the process of rewriting the county zoning code. These were just a few of the highlights of the past year for me!

The Civic Federation is, like every voluntary organization, dependent on the work of its members. It is only as strong and productive as it is through their efforts. So, I want to take this opportunity to recognize and thank those persons who helped make this past year of my presidency so good.

First, my fellow elected officers capably provided me with the support I needed. Carole Ann Barth served as First Vice President this past year, and stood in for me on several occasions. She also kept us current on issues concerning the county Parks Department and Recreation Department as chair of the MCCF Parks and Recreation Committee. At the June elections, Carole Ann was elected as President for the upcoming year.

As Secretary, Sue Schumacher has taken exemplary minutes, and has been re-elected to serve in that office again next year. Bill Schrader, Treasurer, continues to ably handle the Federation's finances (despite my tardiness in depositing reimbursement checks), and has also been re-elected to serve for another year. Our Members-at-Large for this past year, Virginia Sheard, Ann McDonald and Max Bronstein pitched in to do whatever we asked of them, and they did it very well. These three have been re-elected to serve another term, and will be joined by new Members-at-Large Judy Higgins and Jesse Cantrill.

Those who served the Federation as appointed officials this past year also deserve my heartfelt thanks and appreciation. Our Public Relations Officer, Sandy Vogelgesang, gets the word to the press about our meetings and programs. Dan Wilhelm keeps the Data Base correct and current with information on all our members, and he chairs the Transportation and Legislation Committees and serves as our representative to Committee for Montgomery. How he has time to hold down a professional job I'll never know!

Jim Humphrey does triple duty. He is coordinator and chief writer of the "Federation Corner", the MCCF's weekly column in the *Montgomery Sentinel* newspaper, and also functions as unofficial webmaster for the Federation's website: www.montgomerycivic.org. And Jim heads the Planning and

Land Use Committee ably assisted by Virginia Sheard, Max Bronstein, Eileen Finnegan, Natalie Goldberg and Kathie Hulley. With the rewrite of the county zoning code, the growth policy, development projects, land use related legislation, and never-ending revisions of community master plans, this committee's work never ends!

Education Chairman Paula Bienenfeld covers everything having to do with our schools and their humongous budget. Ginny Barnes keeps the Federation's delegates and Executive Committee members informed on conservation and environment issues. As noted before, Carole Ann Barth covers Parks and Recreation. Jim Zepp handles Public Safety issues. And Chuck Lapinski does double duty monitoring Public Finance and Public Utilities issues.

I also want to recognize those who helped me produce the MCCF Annual Awards Banquet this past May: Luella Mast who always makes set-up a party; Bill Schrader for handling the money; and former MCCF President Cary Lamari who did a top flight job of organizing the President's Table. We owe all of these folks an immense debt of gratitude.

Since its founding in 1925, volunteers have been sent by their local neighborhood citizens associations to act as delegates to the Civic Federation, and to serve all county residents by working to preserve and improve the quality of life in Montgomery County. Those whose names are listed above have additionally volunteered to serve for a time in leadership positions with the Federation. But I can't resist the chance to put in final quick promo for MCCF: we can always use more new blood, expertise, interest and help with any/all of our issue areas.

Please consider joining us by urging your neighborhood citizens' group or homeowner association to sign-up as a member of the MCCF if it is not one currently, and then volunteer to serve as your community's delegate to the Civic Fed. Monitoring what our local government does, following how our taxes are spent, and getting to know the players is endlessly challenging and rewarding. Expand your horizons and work toward the betterment of the county by participating in the activities of the Montgomery County Civic Federation.

The views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect formal positions adopted by the Federation. To submit an 800-1000 word column for consideration, send as an email attachment to theelms518@earthlink.net