

2004 Accomplishments

In his second year on the County Council, George Leventhal continued his efforts to improve the quality of life for all Montgomery County residents. Among his accomplishments were:

1. Community Pharmacy

As chair of the County Council's Health and Human Services, Councilmember Leventhal created a Community Pharmacy program that provides prescription drugs to county residents without health insurance. Administered through the non-profit organization Primary Care Coalition, 11 clinics are now stocked with the most-used generic prescription drugs so those in need can easily gain reliable access to medicine. Councilmember Leventhal's efforts resulted in \$350,000 for the Community Pharmacy program, which has already provided thousands of prescriptions since its inception this year.

2. Strathmore/Arts and Humanities

Councilmember Leventhal played the pivotal role in allowing the Strathmore Hall Arts Center to open on time, through a defrayment arrangement that protects county taxpayers from having to pay several million dollars in cost overruns. Councilmember Leventhal also led the County Council process establishing a new matching grant program, the Partnership for the Arts, Humanities, and Recreation. This program leveraged \$1.5 million in county funds, resulting in a total of \$2.8 million in new and increased private donations to arts and humanities programs in the county and \$916,000 in new and increased private donations to county recreation programs. Working with other councilmembers, he also won increased funding for a variety of arts organizations and venues, including Imagination Stage and Olney Theater.

3. Children's Fitness and Nutrition

Councilmember Leventhal held a series of community meetings in fall, 2004 to address the issue of childhood obesity, and to explore what families and the community can do to keep children healthy and fit. Six evening meetings were held throughout the county, with a seventh meeting conducted entirely in Spanish at Identity, Inc. in Gaithersburg. With the sponsorship of Holy Cross Hospital, Councilmember Leventhal also arranged a free showing of the movie "Super Size Me" at the AFI Silver Theatre in Silver Spring, which was followed by a discussion of issues raised in the film.

4. Mental Health Services for Children

Councilmember Leventhal included \$125,000 in the budget for construction of a new pediatric mental health facility at Potomac Ridge Behavioral Health Center in Rockville. When completed, this facility will fulfill one of the goals of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Mental Health, which noted the complete absence of inpatient treatment beds for children in the county.

5. Supporting Workers' Right to Organize

Councilmember Leventhal fought for workers' right to unionize on several occasions. When the publicly-funded CSAAC used intimidation tactics to dissuade its employees from unionizing, Councilmember Leventhal and colleagues strongly urged the organization to refrain from such activities. Ultimately, the workers voted to join the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 500. At Comcast, where an employee leading the unionization effort was fired, Councilmembers Leventhal and Tom Perez encouraged Comcast to engage in fair practices. When the matter went before the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), Comcast issued spurious subpoenas to Councilmembers Leventhal and Perez, embarrassing the company in the press. Subsequently, the fired worker was re-hired.

6. Islamic Center of Maryland

Along with Councilmember Steve Silverman, Councilmember Leventhal ensured that a grandfather clause was included in the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan to enable the Islamic Center to build on land it already owned. The Islamic Center of Maryland has been a registered non-profit organization in the County for nearly 15 years, and the updated Master Plan imposes a limit on construction that would have denied the Center the opportunity to expand its facilities to include a new high school and child care center. Thanks to Councilmembers Leventhal and Silverman, the Islamic Center can continue to grow and serve the County's Muslim community.

7. Protecting Elderly and Vulnerable Residents During Natural Disasters

Working with Councilmember Mike Knapp, Councilmember Leventhal established a list of County senior sites & other sites with vulnerable populations for Pepco and other utilities to use in restoring service during future outages.