

Good Hope residents celebrate safe sidewalk

Walkway constructed to help protect pedestrians along the winding road

Gazette.Net

Maryland Community Newspapers Online

Wednesday, Oct. 29, 2008

http://www.gazette.net/stories/10292008/silvnew185624_32473.shtml

by Robert Dongu | Staff Writer

Pedestrians walking along Cape May Road in Silver Spring once shared the road with oncoming traffic. Now they have their own space after area churches rallied to get a sidewalk.



Chris Rossi/The Gazette

During a ceremony at Good Hope Union United Methodist Church dedicating a new sidewalk built along Cape May Road, Crystal Jackson tells a story about the dangers of walking to church with her child in a stroller along the road.

Members of the Good Hope community and Action in Montgomery – a nonprofit comprised of religious organizations from different denominations – worked with county officials to get a sidewalk constructed on Cape May and Good Hope roads after more than two years of delays and meetings. It is an area residents considered dangerous for pedestrians attempting to navigate its winding roads.

"If you walked in the rain at upcoming cars, today is a day for victory," said the Rev. Jacqueline Jones-Smith, pastor of Good Hope Union United Methodist Church on Good Hope Road, noting the importance of the sidewalk to the community. "We have power when we unite together."

They celebrated the completion of the new sidewalk Saturday at Good Hope Union at an event sponsored by Action in Montgomery.

Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett (D) and Councilman Donald Praisner (D-Dist. 4) of Calverton attended the event along with area residents and members of local churches. Heavy rain on Saturday disrupted plans to have the event outside, where children's games were scheduled to take place on the new sidewalk. Instead, the festivities were moved inside the church.

Leggett said it was "unacceptable" for residents, particularly the elderly, to have to walk along the road without a sidewalk.

"It is the right thing to do," he said.

Plans to get the new sidewalk began in 2006 when members of the Good Hope Union United Methodist Church, Transfiguration Episcopal Church and Colesville United Methodist Church voiced concerns about safety along road during a meeting with other members of Action in Montgomery, a group affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation. Members of the organization then decided to support their cause, according to Cynthia Marshall, an organizer for AIM.

Last year, the sidewalk received approval from the county Planning Board and the county Department of Transportation, but complications involving permits delayed the construction. AIM met with county officials this year to discuss how the project could be done faster; county officials then agreed to build the sidewalk this year. It was completed Oct.10.

According to its Web site, AIM has contributed to efforts resulting in \$144 million for affordable housing since 2001 and \$29.7 million to renovate community centers in historic African-American neighborhoods.

Praisner said the price of the sidewalk, which cost \$306,000, will be offset by its value to the community.

"This is a very reasonably priced project, one that I think is going to have big dividends," he said.

Nunso Nzegu, a junior at Howard University who grew up in the area, told the audience, "We brought some change to the Good Hope community."

"Right now we can see the fulfilling results," he said.