

## **BUDGET TESTIMONY**

I am Steve Schmal and I represent the Library Advisory Committee at the Chevy Chase Library.

Like the rest of the country, Montgomery County is in difficult financial times. The County budget will be tight. But it is vitally important that the County continue to provide high quality services to its residents.

This includes library services. Libraries are not frill; they are not luxuries. They provide vital services to the community.

One area in which library services are vital is education. The County rightly prizes its educational system. What is sometimes overlooked is that libraries are adjunct centers for education; they work in close conjunction with the schools. And if the libraries don't have sufficient resources – staff and materials – students suffer. The Chevy Chase Library partners with Chevy Chase, North Chevy Chase, Rock Creek Forest, and Rosemary Hills Elementary Schools, Westland Middle School, and Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School.

In difficult economic times, people use . . . and need . . . libraries more than ever. Many go to libraries, not bookstores, for books; they go there to read newspapers and magazines; they go there to use computers (as quite a few do not own one); they depend on library resources as they search for jobs.

While the Chevy Chase Library obviously serves the Chevy Chase community, it also serves many people from other parts of the county, including many who are less well-off financially. Persons who work in the community, including domestics and persons providing child care, come to the library during the day. And commuters stop after work.

The Chevy Chase Library is a very busy place. Within the Chevy Chase zip code, over 17,000 people hold library cards (and, as I have previously mentioned, quite a few library users live elsewhere). In the first 3 months of this year, over 67,000 items were checked out. And, while foot traffic is more difficult to measure, in the first 2

months of this year, there were more than 29,000 visits to the library to utilize its services.

While County Executive Leggett has announced he does not plan to close any libraries or reduce library hours, he has proposed significant cuts, in collections, maintenance, and staff. It is hard to envision how libraries such as the Chevy Chase Library will be able to continue to provide high-quality service to their large, diverse populations if this happens. The proposed cuts in staffing would have a particularly serious negative impact.

On behalf of the Chevy Chase Library community, I urge you not to cut the library budget from its FY 2009 level or, if that is simply not possible, to limit cuts to the absolute minimum.

Thank you for your time and interest.