

"Where People and Trees Have Deep Roots and Grow Strong"



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Somerset Elementary School Foundation: Investing in Our School and Community

By Jackie Quan, President, Somerset Elementary School Foundation, Cumberland Avenue

About a century ago, families from Somerset, Drummond and Friendship Heights came together to advocate for the creation of a local school. They understood its importance for their children and benefit for our community. From those seeds of foresight and civic-mindedness grew Somerset Elementary School (SES), which is celebrating 95 years as a cornerstone of our neighborhood.

Editor's note: for more information on the history of Somerset Elementary School, you can refer to the Somerset Resource Guide at <https://bit.ly/459MgHK>.

Twenty-nine years ago, another group of parents organized to formalize local school support. Founded in 1994, the Somerset Elementary School Foundation (SES Foundation) is a 501(c) (3) charitable organization whose mission is to make investments that improve the well-being of students and promote academic achievement, ensuring that every SES student can reach their full potential.

Since its inception, the Foundation's impact on the quality of the school has been substantial, with approximately \$1.5 million in grants disbursed to Somerset Elementary School and neighboring disadvantaged schools. The



Foundation funds ongoing building and grounds work to ensure that students have high-quality facilities. During the pandemic, it was able to nimbly shift and increase food support for families while addressing numerous other new challenges that emerged during this difficult period. Last year, the Foundation supported the creation of a mindfulness room, a calm and nurturing space where students are developing stress management and self-care skills. Every year, the Foundation purchases classroom books, educational subscriptions, innovative learning tools and so much more.

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Montgomery County Bans Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers: Piggy-Backing on Somerset

Creating a sustainable planet is about “piggybacking” on great ideas from other municipalities around the globe. For example, when Washington, DC, banned gas powered leaf blowers (GPLB) a few years ago, Chevy Chase Village and our Town of Somerset piggybacked on this great idea and did the same in our respective neighborhoods. In other words, when one municipality does something, it is then easier for another to do the same, because others have already done all of the “homework.”

Well, all our efforts in Somerset have now paid dividends for Montgomery County. I have personally been working with like-minded residents in the County, to sign a county-wide petition (7000+ signatures), and write and meet with Council Members continuously about gas-powered leaf blowers. Our efforts paid off this past month as County Executive Marc Elrich signed the GPLB ban, Bill No.18-22, into law! As of July 1, 2024, it will be illegal to sell these awful machines in our county, and as of July 1, 2025, it will be illegal to use them. For more information, please visit <https://motherearthproject.org/ban-leaf-blowers>.



Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich signs Bill 18-22, with Somerset Environment Committee Chair Barton Rubenstein (at right).

A BIG CONGRATS TO ALL OF THE RESIDENTS OF SOMERSET WHO SUPPORTED OUR BAN – YOUR CONTRIBUTION HELPED MONTGOMERY COUNTY PIGGY-BACK ON OUR BAN!

Please let us know if you have any questions at tos.environmentcommittee@gmail.com.

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Public Safety Roundup

Our regular Second District police officers — *not* our Town-hired officers — respond to the vast majority (90%) of calls in Town. If you see a police officer driving through Town, you generally will not know if the officer is one of our on-duty Town police officers or one of the Montgomery County Second District officers who regularly serve us.

We cannot depend on the presence of a police officer to deter crime. We have a Town-hired officer on duty for less than two hours a day on average (about 8% of the time). Moreover, our Town police do *not* patrol the Town. The officers’ collective bargaining agreement (in conjunction

with our Town’s current arrangement with the officers) requires officers’ vehicles to sit parked in one or more locations until the officer sees a potential violator or is dispatched for a call.

It is important to keep things in perspective. Our Town has *not* seen the increase in violent crime that some cities have experienced. Crime is *not* spreading from D.C. to Somerset. A Town resident is more likely to be felled by a heart attack, stroke, infectious disease, vehicle collision while traveling to or from Somerset, or other medical calamity than to be the victim of violence in Somerset.