

Youth share concerns in Howard

In a recent meeting for PATH, People Acting Together in Howard, some 50 youth and adults in Howard County were encouraged to come and share their thoughts, opinions and questions on issues they believe are plaguing the county.

“We are preparing the ground work by getting the youth involved,” said Hector Rodriguez, lead organizer of PATH and a parishioner of St. John the Evangelist, Columbia.

PATH’s goal is to be engaged in the things people are interested in including housing, transportation and the young people, said Mr. Rodriguez.

“This is about putting our democracy into action,” said Mr. Rodriguez. “It’s about involving people in the public arena. It’s politics at its best.”

The organization is working on gathering young people’s opinions about what is going on in the community and determining the best course of action from there. The group of young people was asked what they would ask their County Executive Ken Ulman if they could sit down with him for a few minutes. The youth brought up topics like recreation programs and the cost of those programs, health and safety issues, transportation concerns and the threat of incoming gangs. They also wanted to have a young person on the Howard County Parks and Recreation board, said Mr. Rodriguez.

Matthew Sprinkle, 15, and his dad joined the Jan. 28 meeting with a few friends to voice their concerns about the community. Matt said that even though he doesn’t live in the county he still spends time there, his friends live there and his parish of St. Louis, Clarksville, is located in Howard County.

Matt said he wants to know what PATH and the county executive are going to do to resolve these issues and make the county better for his and the next generation.

“I think our age group knows how we are feeling and our experiences are better than other people,” said Matt. “We are able to see it first hand.”

Mr. Rodriguez said the organization believes it's important for young people to be engaged in the public life.

"We have well-educated people and we need to be attuned to how they feel our county is developing," said Mr. Rodriguez. "They are members of our community; they aren't just the future they are the present as well."