

## Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

*By Alan Felsen (the original version of this article was printed in the July 2006 Kemp Mill Community News and is reprinted here with the author's permission)*

Traffic and pedestrian safety are frequent topics of concern at KMCA meetings. Drivers and pedestrians must both obey traffic laws so they can co-exist safely. Homeowners are responsible for keeping sidewalks clear of obstructions so pedestrians can safely use them. Below is a summary of some of the laws related to pedestrian and traffic safety.

### Rules for Drivers

- Drivers **MUST STOP** for pedestrians crossing in a crosswalk. Every intersection where there are sidewalks is considered a crosswalk - even if there are no lines painted on the street. The 'unmarked crosswalk' extends from sidewalk to sidewalk. If a pedestrian has stepped off of the curb and has begun to cross an unmarked residential street from one sidewalk to another you must come to a complete stop and allow them to cross. Failure to stop is punishable by a fine and, if an accident occurs, up to two months in jail.
- Do not park a car within 35 feet of an intersection. Parking closer than this often blocks the view of traffic approaching on the side street and makes it hard to see pedestrians about to step into the road.

### Rules for Pedestrians

- Wait for a break in traffic. They can't just step out in front of a moving car that is too close to stop. However, once the pedestrian has safely begun to cross, all approaching traffic must come to a complete stop until the pedestrian is safely across the road.
- Yield to vehicles when crossing anywhere other than a crosswalk. When crossing in the middle of the block pedestrians have to yield to all vehicular traffic.
- **Use the sidewalk where there is a sidewalk.** It is illegal to walk in the street if there is a sidewalk.
- Walk on the left side of the street (facing traffic) where there are no sidewalks.
- Violations are punishable by a traffic ticket and a fine. Also, walking in violation of the traffic laws makes it more likely that the pedestrian will be at fault in any collision with a vehicle.

### Rules for Homeowners:

- Do not park a vehicle obstructing a sidewalk. This is a common problem in the neighborhood. If one of your neighbors has been doing it, please talk to them about it. If you don't feel comfortable talking to them directly, you may contact the KMCA board with the address and a board member will contact them. You can email the KMCA president at [president@kempmill.org](mailto:president@kempmill.org) or the Transportation

- Committee chair at [jseidema@yahoo.com](mailto:jseidema@yahoo.com). As a last resort, the County Police will be asked to cite vehicles that are continually parked blocking sidewalks.
- Do not allow shrubs or trees to obstruct vision of vehicles traveling on the street or to interfere with pedestrian use of the sidewalk. This is a widespread problem in Kemp Mill.
  - Many sidewalks are obstructed by low hanging branches and overgrown shrubs. If there is a sidewalk in front of your home, please check it today to make sure no shrubs or trees are obstructing it. If shrubs from someone's property are obstructing a sidewalk, you may report it to the Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Code Enforcement section, at 240-777-3785. If the County is notified of a problem, they will instruct the property owner to correct it.

Montgomery County's web site has a section devoted to pedestrian safety including tips for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. The web site is at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dirtmpl.asp?url=/Content/dot/dir/pedsafety/index.asp>. You'll also find a link to it on the KMCA home page at [www.kempmill.org](http://www.kempmill.org). Take a few minutes to check it out.