

## The Perseverance of Shalom

by Barbara Wheeler

The Westminster Community of Shalom recently broke ground for a new community center. The new building will be directly across from their current home at Union Street United Methodist Church.

The church hosts the current Boys & Girls Club after school program that is operated by Westminster Community of Shalom. The Community of Shalom partners with local colleges to recruit volunteers, and also works with the health department to promote drug prevention. Many of the children that come to the after school program are from single parent homes and qualify for free and reduced lunches in local schools. The Community of Shalom offers a safe and secure environment for children to work on their homework and build relationships with their neighbors.



*Westminster Community of Shalom board member Deborah Sims on new community center site, Westminster, MD.*

*Image by: Barbara Wheeler*

*Source: Community and Institutional Ministries*

Westminster Community of Shalom has also built strong relationships with funding partners. They have leveraged funding from the local government, the annual conference and local businesses to build their new facility. Communities of Shalom training encourages sites to use their local resources and build on community strengths to develop their neighborhoods.

While financial capital is important to the redevelopment of a community, human capital is also vital. The Westminster Community of Shalom board composition is a major strength. Velva Cooper had plans to open her own nonprofit organization when she went through Communities of Shalom training five years ago. "I've always had a heart for community development," Cooper said.

The volunteer leadership of the Westminster Community of Shalom patiently planned and waited for their vision of a new facility to come to fruition. Five years of leadership development and resource gathering prepared for the foundation that will be laid for the new community center. In addition to the after school programming, Westminster Community of Shalom plans to offer parenting classes, activities for seniors, and health awareness sessions.

